



Birtley  
House

# House & Home

The Newsletter for Birtley House

Edition 2 • 2023

## A culture of care

We look at Birtley's core values and speak to those keeping our residents safe

MAN (AND WOMAN'S!)  
BEST FRIEND

Meet our  
**Birtley GP**

**Activities update**

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
BIRTLEY'S PHYSIOS

The social care  
**phoenix**



*“Change is the only constant in life” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, and helping our residents to adapt to these changes is one of the most important and essential things we do at Birtley House*”

# Welcome...

to the latest edition of the  
Birtley House Newsletter

A few years ago, we determined to define Birtley House's core values so that everyone – staff and service users – have a better understanding of what we stand for and what we strive to achieve. After a lengthy but enlightening process of corporate introspection, the central values of



Kindness, Integrity, Positivity and Adaptability were agreed upon, and these four cornerstones are referred to continually in our training and everyday dealings of our staff.

Of the four, my gut feeling is that the level of newfound Adaptability is the value which has seen the most significant improvement amongst the staff. (That is not to say that Kindness, Integrity and Positivity are experienced any less, but just that Adaptability has taken the greatest leap forward). Let me try to explain why.

Nursing homes need to be extremely adaptable places. We are dealing with human beings at what is often a very emotional and challenging time. Our residents have already experienced enormous change simply by moving into Birtley House and there are often further changes that they experience during their time with us.

The Birtley team has had to develop its adaptability skills to a high degree so that we can think through the different scenarios that our residents might be facing and plan for different outcomes. They do this while recognising that every resident is unique in what they want, so their emotional adaptability must be finely tuned.

“Change is the only constant in life” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, and therefore helping our residents to adapt to these changes is one of the most important and essential things we do at Birtley House.

Nursing Homes are intrinsically chaotic places. I don't mean that in a disorganised way, simply that no two days are ever the same when we are looking after 40 or so residents with a vast range of care needs. Being able to develop our adaptability allows us to react to things better, and this helps our residents worry less about the future and what it may contain.

Ultimately, all four of our core values need to work together to create an environment that allows residents to feel happy, safe, and well-cared for. Sylwia works tirelessly to empower each staff member with these skills, and if you have been on the receiving end of a time when a staff member showed exceptional adaptability then I am very glad. I'm sure it won't be the last!

**Frank Whalley**  
Director



# In safe hands

When we first launched our Birtley core values back in January 2020, we were confident that we had homed in on what we stood for as a business but more importantly what we expected from every member of staff in our Home, whatever their job role. Recruiting and retaining the right people is paramount in any business but most especially when you are in the business of caring. Arguably 'kindness' is a given in our sector, of course it is, but what is sometimes less easy to quantify is that unique combination of personnel who come together so harmoniously and engender that special team spirit.

As you enter Birtley House it quickly becomes clear that this is no carbon copy care facility but a family home with our residents at front and centre of our attentions. As Magda, Rose, and Beverley will concur, no two days are the same and the job is certainly not dull. We must reassure others that we are a 'safe pair of hands' whilst juggling multiple spinning plates.

Some of you may not realise that Magda has worked at Birtley for almost seven years with nearly six of those as a carer on the night shift. It has been a bonus and delight to welcome someone who is so familiar with our Birtley 'family' and who brings the traits of her previous role into her new one.

Rose is the newest and youngest member of our small but dynamic team! She is a recent graduate and is working part time at Birtley so that she has time to pursue other interests outside of our walls. Rose's late grandparents were both residents who lived out their final days at Birtley. It is lovely that Rose applied to work with us after valuing the care that her grandparents enjoyed.

Beverley makes up the trio and covers weekends. Her boundless enthusiasm and kind-hearted nature is infectious. Beverley brings a wealth of experience having run her own daycare nursery so has effectively swapped the little ones for the older generation.



Asked to describe the department, Magda and Rose see reception as 'a communication and information hub both internally and externally for residents, families and others.' As Beverley recently explained to a resident: "If it is within our power to organise, we will try our best to do what we can to meet our residents' needs."

I think that epitomises a 'safe pair of hands' in a nutshell!

*Sinéad*

**Sinéad Whalley**  
**Resident Liaison Director**

*“Recruiting and retaining the right people is paramount in any business but most especially when you are in the business of caring”*

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# A meeting of minds

**Birtley House offers an extended family environment to its residents. That includes looking out for each other and discussing important issues. Our Registered Manager, Sylwia Indycka, tells us about a new committee that ensures all voices are heard.**

I am a great believer in feedback in a nursing home environment. As a team, we make important decisions daily so why not involve those who call Birtley House home?

Last year we launched our very first Residents' Led Care Home Committee. This committee was established to ensure that we are listening to and involving residents in important aspects of daily life at Birtley. Our residents can now monitor the performance and effectiveness of the

Birtley projects that directly impact their experience and satisfaction.

Thanks to the committee's regular involvement and support, we promote residents' wellness and personalised care delivery. What's more, the committee provides feedback in all areas of their experience of living at Birtley, supported by Birtley's core values of Kindness – Integrity – Positivity – Adaptability.

The residents' committee has enjoyed, for example, auditing mealtimes and



safety procedures, including areas such as our boiler room. The committee has also monitored the welcoming of new residents and safeguarding practices.

Members of the residents' committee are appointed to serve a minimum of six months and up to a maximum of one year's service. The role includes being the voice of Birtley House residents and being an advocate for residents' rights, along with promoting wellbeing and a meaningful life.

I am so grateful for all the time and efforts that each of our committee members has put in over past year, and I look forward to another successful year ahead. Our residents' commitment has been instrumental in helping us reach our goals and be the best we can be.

I am incredibly thankful for everything that the committee does every day. Thank you.

**Sylwia Indycka**  
Registered Manager

*“The residents’ committee has enjoyed, for example, auditing mealtimes and safety procedures, including areas such as our boiler room”*





# Doctor *in the house*

The residents of Birtley House have their own GP, Dr Timo Rinttila, who visits the home weekly. Dr Timo, as we know him at Birtley, lives in Godalming with his wife and two daughters. Here he answers our questions about his work with Birtley.

## **How long have you been GP at Birtley House?**

I started my weekly visits to Birtley House more than a decade ago. It was January 2013 and I had recently joined the Wonerish Surgery as a salaried GP. During my first visit, I remember being truly impressed by the lovely building and the grounds. I had certainly never set foot in such a nursing home before!

## **What brought you to Birtley?**

I had studied medicine in Guy's King's and St Thomas' Medical School in London and qualified as a junior doctor in 2004. After several hospital jobs, mandatory National Service in my home country of Finland, and more hospital jobs, I decided to embark on General Practice training in Guildford. This is how I came to work with the residents at Birtley.

## **What do you like about general practice?**

General practice is a lifelong learning process and even though there are medical conditions that we get used to treating, there is much more to general practice than just medicine and patients. Over the years I have encountered a wide variety of patients and medical problems, whether they are physical, emotional, or social. Each face carries a unique story, and through the years at Birtley House, I have been fortunate to share in the joys and challenges that come with ageing.

## **What do you enjoy most about your work at Birtley?**

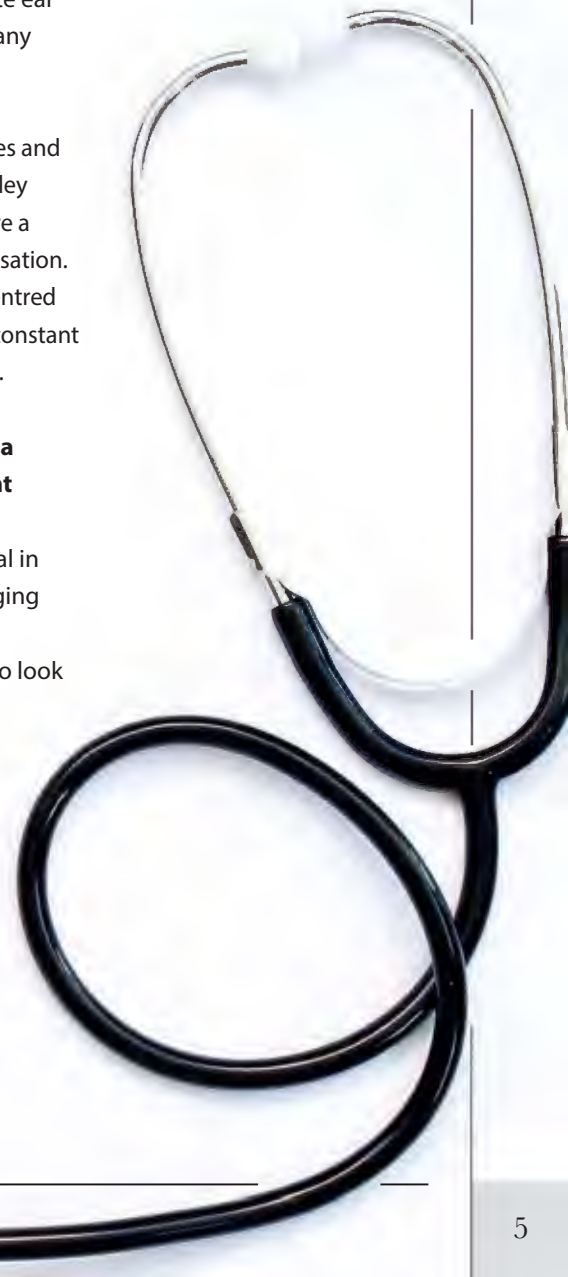
One of the most rewarding aspects of my work here has been the opportunity to take a holistic approach to healthcare. It's not just about treating ailments, it's about thinking of the quality of life. In the later stages

of life, a compassionate ear can be as valuable as any prescription.

I have always been impressed by the nurses and supporting staff at Birtley House, and feel they are a real asset to the organisation. Birtley has a patient-centred ethos that has stayed constant over the past ten years.

## **What is the secret to a strong doctor/patient relationship?**

Consistency is essential in building trust and forging relationships. Birtley's residents have come to look forward to my visits, and I, in turn, truly enjoy every moment spent looking after them. It is a privilege to serve as their GP, and I look forward to continuing this journey with these incredible individuals and all the staff at Birtley.



# Summer & Autumn Memories Days

The Activities Department at Birtley House has had a busy time of late. With autumn now upon us, Tina Bell, Head of Activities and Wellbeing, looks back on a wonderful summer of events.



As our team embraces the autumn and all the fun activities it brings, we cannot forget our wonderful summer.

What a party we had to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Birtley House looked sensational as we celebrated the day. We had plenty of bunting, balloons, wonderful refreshments, and even a life size cut out of King Charles himself!

Our regular pianist, Kevin Jacot, played patriotic music as we sung along to songs and waved our flags. The buzz in the room was amazing, with both residents and staff coming together to for a memorable and fun day.

Our Strawberry Tea afternoon was a huge

success on a beautiful summer's day. The garden was blooming, the sun was shining, and the strawberries were sweet and plentiful.



This annual event is always a great afternoon, with the coming together of residents and staff for a memorable and fun time.

The teamwork required to organise this event is remarkable. We know what needs to be done and we get on and do it. Yes, it is hard and tiring work but when our residents and staff sit in the rose garden chatting and laughing, eating their strawberries, and sipping Pimms, we can look around and say it is worth it.

We were also blessed with fantastic weather when we took several residents on a Guildford Dapdune Wharf boat trip. A picnic lunch was enjoyed while we listened to the gentle splash of the water against the boat.

I have recently booked some new entertainers including Katie, with her amazing tapdancing feet, and 'Uke and Sing'. With Katie's tapdancing talent and Mandy's gorgeous singing voice, we couldn't help but sing, tap along, and dance in our chairs!

One of my favourite recent activities was a quiz afternoon, hosted by Richard, our contractor electrician, and his mother. Teams were made up of residents and staff, and I am not sure I have ever witnessed such competition!

It was so much fun to watch staff and residents interacting together, all wanting to be in the winning team. It's something we must do again soon!

Now that autumn has

umn



# Delightfully diverse

**Birtley is blessed to have a diverse team of individuals. We appreciate the differences between all who work and live in the Home, and treat people's beliefs, cultures, and experiences with respect.**

arrived, we're looking forward to some traditional activities in the run up to Christmas – both indoors and outdoors. Birtley's grounds are so beautiful at this time of year, we'll be sure to spend lots of time outdoors enjoying the autumnal colours, sounds, and scents in our garden.

**Tina Bell**  
*Head of Activities and Wellbeing*



**T**he Birtley Team consists of 80 individuals of 12 different nationalities, with an extraordinary level of knowledge and compassion. Our team consistently displays the highest ethical standards built on our company values of Kindness, Integrity, Positivity and Adaptability.

Diversity within our team has become a source of positive interaction and we regularly encourage staff to share their traditions, cultures, and heritage with our residents. This can spark deeper connections and understanding.

Many of our residents have been fortunate enough to live in other countries or travel the world. Sharing these experience with one another has helped to build friendships and respect.

**We are great pet lovers at Birtley House. Dogs are a particular favourite with our residents and staff alike. They love us unconditionally and give their hearts away for free**

**T** rue words indeed, and if we are asked why we say that dogs are man's best friend, I would say it's because of their loyalty, companionship and affectionate natures. Studies have shown that dogs can feel emotions and this is shown by their devotion to their owners. In return, dogs are often a major factor contributing to our own health and happiness, so it is definitely a mutually beneficial relationship.

Here at Birtley, we have always welcomed our four-legged friends, and visitors often bring their dogs in to visit their loved ones, knowing what pleasure this will bring. Our Registered Manager Sylwia occasionally brings Jasper, a 5 year old Cavapoo, to work here - he is a 'canine celebrity' in his own right, having had his photo in their local newspaper as well as being selected as a "model" for a Dog Agency should the need arise! I think Jasper rather enjoys coming to support Sylwia here from time to time, and he's certainly very popular with all the residents!

PETS AS THERAPY is a national charity founded in 1983, that enhances

the health and wellbeing of thousands of people in communities across the U.K., and we are extremely fortunate here that we are regularly visited by two owners of PatDogs and their much-loved dogs. Claire Jenkinson has been coming to Birtley for the past 12 years, initially with her beloved spaniel, Theo who many of us remember well, and now with Ambrose, and Kerry Reid brings Moss, her much-loved spaniel. I asked them both to write a paragraph or two for this article, which they willingly agreed to do.

But first a little about the organisation that relies totally on amazing volunteers such as Claire and Kerry. PAT volunteers currently visit 6,761 settings in the U.K. including 767 hospitals, 3,989 care homes, 220 hospices, 25 prisons and 1,767 schools. There are more than 4,000 volunteers, taking their PAT dogs to visit these settings.

Pets as Therapy is a bit different from other animal charities, such as Canine Partners and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, because volunteers don't train their dogs specifically to be PAT dogs. What is important



## *Man (and woman's!) best friend*



is the temperament and general obedience of the dog. The idea is that they are pets who are happy to meet people.

Claire told us:

"Theo was 6 when he first started at Birtley House, and he loved his regular visits until shortly before he died at nearly 13. In his paw-steps came Ambrose, who passed his test to become a PAT DOG aged just 15 months, and he continues as your PAT DOG, alongside Moss and her owner Kerry.

Ambrose loves coming to Birtley, and his role is to bring joy and comfort to those dog-lovers amongst the Residents. He takes his role very enthusiastically, especially when the occasional treat is offered and loves his visits to Birtley. While full of bounce he does know when to be still and has brought a smile to even the most frail of Residents, which is very moving. Dogs certainly have a sixth sense at times, seemingly to understand exactly what is required of them with each individual visit.

Ambrose and I were of course unable to visit during the Pandemic as well as during a couple of occasions when I unfortunately was unable to drive, and recently I fractured my shoulder, so visits had to be halted for a while, but we hope to back soon on a fortnightly basis

and look forward to seeing all our friends at Birtley House again more regularly."

Kerry says:

"I have been a Pets as Therapy volunteer for 6+ years now. Moss is my second PAT dog, taking over about two years ago. Moss is 8 years old and joined our family four and a half years ago. She is not the most obvious candidate to be a PAT dog, as she is a lively and quite excitable springer spaniel. She has a sensitive side though, so she did the assessment and passed! She has taken to her PAT role amazingly well - at home she can be energetic, at 'work'



them, some had dogs as children, and some just like dogs. Often Residents tell me it just makes them feel happy to see Moss.

Sometimes we see the more active Residents



she is very calm and intuitive.

Moss & I have been visiting Birtley House for just over a year now, one afternoon a week and I have absolutely no doubt that Moss loves her afternoons at Birtley. The Residents and staff are so enthusiastic and welcoming, and Moss gets lots of attention and compliments (and the very occasional strawberry from afternoon tea!). Everyone really seems to enjoy our visits and looks forward to them. Some people have owned dogs previously and really miss

outside on the terrace or in the Drawing Room, if they are not busy with other activities, (and Moss does sometimes disrupt bridge games for a little cuddle!). We visit the less mobile Residents in their rooms, where we might just sit and chat and Moss sits quietly next to the resident to be stroked. Other Residents (and Moss knows who) like nothing better than having her on their lap where she settles down and enjoys some love and attention. Sometimes new Residents

are not quite sure how to engage with her, so she has worked out that sitting at someone's feet is a good way of getting close but not too close. Very occasionally we have visited someone who is very poorly, and Moss has laid next to them on their bed (with permission) keeping very still & calm, with noticeable benefits.

We have met so many lovely people at Birtley and had such interesting conversations and we look forward to coming every week."

I personally would like to say a very big THANK YOU to both Claire & Ambrose, Kerry & Moss for spending so much time giving pleasure and companionship to many of our Residents. Recently I was asked by someone who was returning for a second respite visit after nearly 4 years, "Do you still have the PAT dog visiting at Birtley?" She was, needless to say, delighted to hear that we did! I like to think that these remarkable four-legged friends of ours know how special and valued they are.

*Caroline*

**Caroline Whalley**  
**Director**





**Just like our Home, the grounds at Birtley House require much care and attention. Here we look at a recent maintenance project on one of our much-loved garden features, the Birtley garden pond.**

# Pond Life

**T**he eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that the Birtley garden pond has been empty for a little while now. We are carrying out some



*Our beautiful pond gives pleasure to visitors, family, and residents all year round*



*A photograph from the Birtley archive showing our pond in its infancy*



*The sculpture pictured is by a sculptor from Zimbabwe who exhibited at one of the first sculpture gardens held at Birtley House*

essential renovation work. Over time, a major deposit of silt had built up to the extent that the water was barely covering it in places. We have had many pond experts come out to assess what could be done. Apparently, it was not a straightforward task. Due to the garden pond's generous proportions, it was not feasible to manually remove the silt. It would have taken weeks of backbreaking work. We had proposals to use large diggers, but this would have caused so much damage to the lawn that we were reluctant to go down that road. Finally, a solution was offered by 'sludge experts' in the shape of the company who maintain our waste treatment plants.

They arrived bright and early one morning with their pumps and hoses ready to go. Unfortunately, after a couple of hours they had to admit defeat. The sludge was not sludgy enough and was clogging the machinery! A week later, after some efforts on our part to water the silt down, they were back with the big sludge-sucking lorry.

Even with this industrial equipment the work still took several days and the assistance of several men in the garden pond with spades. Finally, it was done. The garden pond is now silt free and has started to refill. We have been glad to see the heavy rain lately as we wait patiently for the water to rise.

Simon's grandfather, Dr Driver, and father, Dick Whalley, created the original garden pond shortly after their arrival at Birtley House in 1945. It was a lot smaller in those days. It was extended in the 1950s. When the garden pond was dry, it was fascinating to be able to see the original area and the later addition. The original garden pond was planted with water lilies and we will be taking this opportunity to plant some more. We look forward to seeing them in bloom next summer.

No sooner had we started work on the garden pond than the water level in the Birtley lake dropped suddenly! We discovered that the sump had developed

a crack, and the water was leaking away. Julian and his team, who carry out landscape maintenance in the grounds, rode to the rescue, building a temporary dam to keep the water levels up in the woodland arm of the lake. Work will start shortly on replacing the damaged sump.

Birtley's lake was originally created by Simon's father, Dick Whalley, in the early 1960s. The family voted to forgo their annual holiday to pay for the works. In the late 1970s a drainage ditch was enlarged to create the second arm. The lake is home to both rainbow trout and brown trout.

Day tickets for fly fishing are available from April to October. Fortunately, the trout appear to have been able to make their way to the safety of the woodland arm of the lake when the water started draining. Once the works are completed, we anticipate the lake refilling over the winter to be back to its full splendour in the spring.





# Tom's Gardening Club



Birtley House has been working with the Halow Project organisation since 2017. Tom Jackson started as a Halow young person and is now a paid gardener at Birtley.

Back in the spring, Tom, one of our garden team, and his assistant Gill, started a gardening club for the residents. This has been a great success and our residents have enjoyed creating seed bombs, arranging flowers from our gardens, and identifying herbs from the kitchen garden, among other green-fingered activities. The garden brings so much daily pleasure to all those who live and work at Birtley. It has been a real treat for our residents to get more involved. Well done Tom and Gill.



# Birtley Estates News

## Coronation Avenue

To commemorate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, we have planted a 'coronation avenue' of trees from the Birtley lawn down to the lake. With pairs of walnut, sweet chestnut, alder and willow, this will become a delightful shady walk in years to come.



## Beorc Leah Wins Silver Medal

We are delighted to announce that Birtley's very own Beorc Leah apple brandy won a silver medal at the London Spirits Competition in the spring. A great result from our first competition!

## Open Gardens

In May we were delighted to welcome the public back to the Birtley Estate for the first time in four years with our Open Gardens event. The sun shone and we received many compliments on our beautiful gardens and grounds.



## Harvest Festival

This basket of fruit and vegetables from Birtley's gardens was donated to Grafham Church Harvest Celebration.



**It is well documented that physiotherapy improves both cognitive health and mobility. All Birtley residents are offered this important treatment. In this issue, we introduce you to Birtley's very own physiotherapists, Janet Paremain and Trish Swyny.**

### Janet

“I always wanted to be a physiotherapist when I was at school and went on to study the subject in Wakefield, Yorkshire when I was 18. I have now been qualified for 36 years and have been very lucky as I have always loved my job. I worked in various hospitals including Mount Alvernia before coming to Birtley.

I have worked at Birtley for over 20 years. Initially I was just covering for someone, but I enjoyed it so much that I have been here ever since. I have seen a lot of changes over this time and a lot of staff have come and gone. But the warmth, excellent care and teamwork have remained. It is a very special place to work, and I feel very lucky to be part of the Birtley family. It has always been great fun working with different people, meeting new residents, and hearing stories about their lives. No two days are ever the same.

I have worked with my physio colleague Trish for the last seven years. We worked



# Meet the

together in 1989 at Hemel Hempstead hospital and we now live in the same road in Little Bookham. When I obtained the physio contract in 2016, I asked Trish to come and join me at Birtley.

When residents arrive at the nursing home, we identify any physical problems they may have which could be helped

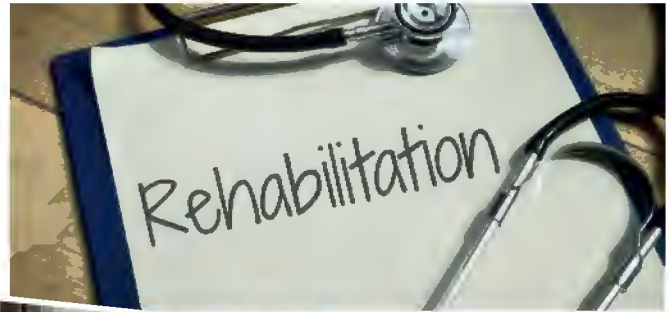
with physiotherapy. We can determine any equipment that the carers might need to use whilst caring for the resident. Many residents benefit from physiotherapy sessions which might include walking re-education, strengthening and balance exercises. This can be done in the physio area, in their rooms or in the beautiful

grounds which we are so fortunate to have. We also try to get as many people out in the fresh air and nature as much as possible. Everyone enjoys that.

I try to practice what I preach and keep as active as possible. I swim every day, enjoy yoga, Pilates, walking, travel, cooking and am completely addicted to bridge. My three children live in Brighton and London, but my happiest time is when we all get together: this year we have been to pottery making and painting classes, music festivals, skiing, water sport holidays and our annual trip to Cornwall.

My latest hobby is golf and I enjoy getting encouraging words of wisdom from some of the residents. I need all the help I can get!”





# Physios

## Trish

“I first heard about the job of a physiotherapist in a careers lesson at school when I was about 15 years old. I immediately knew that it was the job I wanted to do. I had always wanted to work in a hospital, but not as a nurse or a doctor. Physio was much more attractive to me. The thought of helping with people’s recovery through exercise really appealed to me.

I trained at St Mary’s Hospital and started my career in my local hospital in 1986. After a few years I moved on to my second job in Hemel Hempstead, which is where I met Janet. We worked together in elderly care, so not unlike our work today.

Over the next few years, I had several other jobs, three children, and three years abroad in Geneva. On returning to the UK, I worked part time at Mount Alvernia, as well as doing some work with people in their own homes. I also did some work with patients with multiple sclerosis at a regular drop-in

group session.

I was delighted when Janet contacted me to ask if I would work with her at Birtley House. On my first visit to the home, I realised that Birtley was a very special place to work. The care and attention that the

staff gave to the residents was something that really impressed me.

After seven years at Birtley I still enjoy my job. Getting to know new residents and working out how physio can help them is always a real pleasure. I believe that most, if not all, residents really benefit from physio, enabling them to remain as mobile and active as possible in their later years.

We see residents at least weekly for physio which means that we can really get to know them. It is always enjoyable chatting to them during our time together. I never get bored listening to their stories about the lives they led before they came to Birtley. We often compare places they have visited or lived, as travelling is one of my favourite pastimes.

In my spare time I enjoy all sorts of crafts, especially working with stained glass. Like Janet, I have recently taken up golf and enjoy Pilates.

I look forward to the next few years at Birtley House. The last seven have been a real pleasure.”



# Prevention

The team at Birtley House believes strongly in training its staff and empowering them with knowledge to minimise risk. Tim Whalley, our Nominated Individual, explains why prevention is better than cure.

When it comes to managing risks at Birtley House, we adopt the principle that it is better to stop something bad from happening in the first place than having to manage the consequences. To this end, the competence of staff to perform their role is fundamental and is why we invest heavily in a programme of training that goes well beyond any minimum requirements.

In addition to a robust and personalised induction for all new staff, we balance the convenience

*“By considering our residents’ wishes, we can better prepare staff to apply the theory of training into real-world situations.”*



# is better than cure

of online e-learning with supplementary and in-depth face-to-face training to ensure that our staff are equipped to provide the best care possible. We also encourage staff to explore their roles further with relevant qualifications. For example, 67% of our care-providing staff have a Level 2 qualification in comparison to other local good and outstanding homes of only 28%\*.

Our e-learning platform is well-established and was chosen for its excellent content. It provides easy access on mobile devices or PCs and can be completed at work or from home in bite-sized sessions. The convenience of e-learning is reinforced by in-depth, face-to-face training. These bespoke arrangements are delivered either by experts

amongst our own staff or by specialist third parties. This brings the additional advantages that come with learning in a group and being able to respond to different individuals' knowledge and confidence. These courses give practical hands-on experience of



equipment and procedures. We are increasingly finding ways to include residents in our face-to-face training sessions. When it comes to fire safety, infection control, or even the challenging topic of safeguarding, having the perspective of a resident and

sharing their experiences is proving invaluable. By considering our residents' wishes and factors such as dignity and privacy, we can better prepare staff to apply the theory of training into real-world situations. Our commitment to training sits alongside

and ensure that we minimise the risk of accidents or poor practice and maintain a safe and healthy environment. We believe in preventing problems before they occur, and whilst we are challenged by the sheer breadth of training required for our roles, by the constant changes to guidance, 'best practice', and by the limited time available, it remains central to our culture at Birtley.

*\*Skills for Care ASC-WDS (15th September 2023)*

**Tim Whalley**  
*Director and Nominated Individual*



robust company policies, an outstanding staff to resident ratio, a focus on teamwork, and a culture of continuous improvement. Together, these elements provide us with the best possible foundations from which to operate the Home





In the wake of recent years and events, social care requires a change in approach. David Holmes and Simon Whalley share their thoughts on this important topic.

# The social care

It is an unflinching truth that from ashes comes new life. The bonfire of our life expectations, built high by mental health issues and advancing years, has burned fiercely in the pandemic, but new shoots are beginning to show. Two themes have shown particular creative energy; that of economic sustainability in the face of the carbon threat; and solving the plight of those requiring care and support, who have been long embattled by a lack of recognition of the need not just for medical care but for a quality of life that gives them hope, purpose and comfort.

The surge of effort to plant trees, support the local economy and waste less has resulted in amazing collaboration and support – even between competitors. In Social Care, however, the vital shift from outdated and patronising medical models to progressive, person-focussed models, that truly value both the cared-for and the carer,

is perhaps less advanced and more hidden. But even here we can see the first glimmer of a change which is potentially explosive in its ultimate effect on all our lives. A vision is emerging in the bright mirror of our society and its reflection warms the heart.

The future of care has been the subject of numerous Government papers over many years. Mostly these have been scratchings, as if at an irritant rather than an opportunity to build something that meets the fundamental, and legally required, focus on each individual and their specific needs and wants rather than lumping everyone into a standard pot called Social Care.

Social Care needs changing both in spirit and in title. For now, we can call the future model Social Care 2 (SC2), but in due course we should agree something more appropriate – Life Care, perhaps. Its purpose needs reframing too. SC2 aims to ensure that people can lead progressive, purposeful and happy lives through support that enables all to build on their own strengths and maintain their capability to live as independently as they wish. This means that those of working age can

build an independent quality of life while those who are older can delay decline. Both can achieve this by shaping their own support in a system which works for them personally. Care and support is then delivered by skilled, talented and fully valued specialist staff. The SC2 system encourages innovation both in delivery models, and also in technology, resulting in support that is fully personalised to each individual's dignity, needs and preferences.

*“A change of social policy will provide a big win for all – for people who live better lives, for staff who become teachers, mentors and enablers, and society, as people need less support.”*

## So how does this work?

Firstly, we need to fully engage with the public to create a deeper understanding of the SC2 model and what it means. Without public support, SC2 cannot succeed. Secondly, we need innovative market structures which ensure that people have the power to shape their own wants and needs.

Beyond this, recognition that delivery of care is organised locally and engages the whole team of professionals, families, friends and the community. The professional team of Support Specialists, principled people of great character, recognise the importance of a fully purposeful, rich and happy life for all those in their care and are properly rewarded for the complex and challenging role they deliver – both for those in older age and those of working age who also have aspirations to live full and rewarding lives. Full and seamless integration across all the agencies with responsibility for the whole health and care sector is clearly also a pre-requisite for the achievement of all this.

## How can this be delivered?

The new SC2 System needs to put people first and deliver



# phoenix

positive change through seamless structures that are overseen by a rights-based entity (an Independence Board?) which focuses on individuals' ownership of their care and support. Assessment of need, support for choice and review of delivery counterbalances those bodies that commission services and ration resources. National criteria for eligibility together with local market-shaping will be directed by consumer sovereignty to ensure quality, progression and positive outcomes. Staff roles in SC2 have to be developmental and holistic, focusing on social, psychological, and self-actualisation needs and wants as well as medical wellbeing.

People will work in innovative care and support models, often utilising the

latest technology. Roles will be filled by outstanding people who are both highly skilled and bring the values and motivation to do this challenging work well. In the SC2 model, valued staff are called Support Specialists. These jobs will be accredited with new qualification structures (supported by investment in training) and therefore prized and oversubscribed and based on a National Minimum Care Wage which sits at least £2-3/ hour higher than the National Living Wage.

#### How will it be funded?

SC2 requires a significant injection of funding at the outset, with ongoing spending higher than it has been in the past. Funding reflects the high value society places on SC2, a value equal to that of the NHS, with which it must integrate seamlessly. This increased level of funding will, in time, be offset in part by the reduction in support that some people need as new, innovative, progressive models kick in and people progress to live more independently. SC2 has a significant element of 'invest-to-save.'

In SC2 people will also fund

their own accommodation and personal living costs unless they cannot, in which case it will be funded through Local Housing Allowance (enhanced where appropriate), Universal Credit or other income and allowances.

In addition, SC2 will initiate a landmark programme to close the gap between working age adults with needs, wants and aspirations and other people. Support for this cohort has always been hamstrung by a medical model which has caused them to be severely disadvantaged in all walks of life. Under SC2, people are encouraged to articulate their aspirations and ambitions, receive support to develop the requisite skills and capabilities, and be provided with pathways along which they can progress.

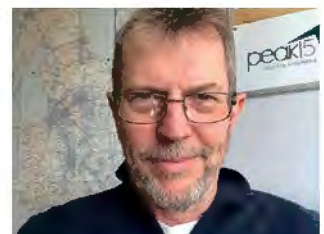
This will require a change of social policy too, for example by encouraging and incentivizing employers to employ people with SC2 needs. This will provide a big win for all – for people who live better lives, for staff who become teachers, mentors and enablers, and society, as people need less support.

So now we can see in our society's mirror a clearer future. For too many years

the reflection has been one of decay and decline as real terms funding cuts have taken their toll. But now we have a decision to make. Do we just do more of the same, and watch our sector lurch from crisis to crisis, or do we choose a different course? Those working in Social Care are generally optimists by nature and believe we can see a future where SC2 is realised; distinct from, but wholly collaborative with, the NHS and other agencies in its breadth and clear purpose; giving person-centred care and support in all areas of life and at all stages.

It is in our gift.

**David Holmes**  
**Chairman of Peak 15 Ltd**



**& Simon Whalley**  
**Chairman of Birtley House Group Ltd**

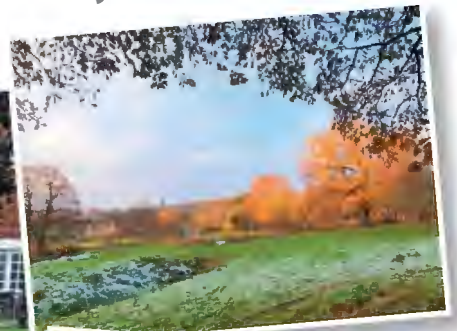


# News from the Mews

Birtley Mews is a unique development of eight independent living apartments situated in a peaceful courtyard setting behind Birtley House. Ania Klementowicz, Mews Coordinator, updates us on the latest events from this tranquil corner of Birtley.

One of the main joys of working in the Mews is being part of such a close and bonded team. Although most of us are relative newbies to the Mews (two years for me), one of our wardens recently celebrated her 10-year anniversary within the Birtley family. The day was marked with the beautiful gift of an orchid from the Whalley family, and the wardens had the chance to celebrate her accomplishment a few days later with cake, chocolates, and her favourite beverage. There was much merriment!

We are blessed to be surrounded by wildlife at the Mews. Earlier this year, one of our resident mallard ducks again laid her clutch of eggs in our internal courtyard. Once the ducklings had hatched, the mother duck could fly out, but the ducklings had



favourite times of year for one-to-one time with the Mews residents, playing board games and crafting. Scrabble is a particular favourite in our little community!

When the nights draw in, there is never a better time to wrap up warm and enjoy some indoor pastimes together.

**Ania Klementowicz**  
Mews Coordinator



to be herded out from the courtyard, through the corridor and out the front door. This year we have been very fortunate, with six of the ducklings surviving. Our residents have loved watching them grow. The ducks have used the Mews courtyard as their second home and have chosen

to visit us daily. People think that birds lack the same canniness of other animals, yet our little group seem well able to tell the time and often appear just as our residents congregate for lunch.

As winter approaches, we are enjoying some seasonal activities and plenty of autumnal walks in the Birtley grounds. This is one of my



# The Birtley Bulletin

News and celebrations  
from Birtley House



## We've made the finals!

The team at Birtley House is delighted to announce that we have been shortlisted for three prestigious local awards. The Surrey Care Association Awards 2023 has selected Birtley House as finalists for the following categories:

1. Team of the Year (small/medium provider)
2. Innovation in Workforce Recruitment and Retention
3. Nursing Home of the Year.

We have everything crossed for a successful result for our worthy team members!

## Recognition for Birtley House Staff

We would like to offer our congratulations to the following staff for their much-appreciated long service:



**15 years at Birtley:**  
**Mary Blay, (left)**  
Dietary Coordinator

**5 years at Birtley:** (left to right): **Sylwia Indycka**, Registered Manager; **Elizabeth Tilley**, Chaplain; **Regie Derecho**, Night Carer



## Did you know?



Birtley House holds a staff summer party every year to say thank you to the staff and their families. This year we were blessed with a glorious evening in our grounds. It is always fun to socialise and relax together away from our day jobs.



This year we created a Jacaranda Terrace Garden to ensure that our residents and staff could enjoy the glorious summer we had. It was a very popular place to unwind and enjoy the outdoors in the shade.

Birtley has a new set of wheels to escort our residents out and about. We love our new people carrier and look forward to many more exciting trips in the future.



# Award winning limited-edition brandy



Within the 48 acres of grounds of the Birtley Estate sits a cider apple orchard of 700 trees.

The apple orchard was planted in 2012 and is managed with environmental care.

The apples from the orchard are used to produce a small-batch, premium apple brandy, in the style of Calvados.

The cider is matured on site then distilled at Silent Pool Distillery in Albury.

The spirit is then aged in oak barrels before bottling.

The brandy is named 'BEORC LEAH', the old English name for Birtley, meaning 'clearing in the birch woods'.

We are proud to announce that BEORC LEAH won a silver medal at this year's prestigious London Spirits Competition.

**Birtley's award-winning, limited-edition brandy retails at £70 per bottle and is available to purchase [www.birtleyestate.co.uk/brandy/](http://www.birtleyestate.co.uk/brandy/)**

**[sales@birtleyestate.co.uk](mailto:sales@birtleyestate.co.uk)  
01483 678394**

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## House & Home

If you would like more information about Birtley House Nursing Home, or you would like to subscribe to (or unsubscribe from) this newsletter, please email [info@birtleyhouse.co.uk](mailto:info@birtleyhouse.co.uk) or write to:

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