



house & home

Birtley
House

Edition I, 2020



We're all in this together
Continuity in troubled times
We will keep calm and carry on!
Comfort in Covidia



Welcome to the latest edition of the Birtley House Newsletter...

Amongst the chaos and uncertainty that the Covid-19 virus has brought to the world, we remain positive that we are doing all we can to keep our residents safe while also being mindful of their need for fun and joy in their lives. We have been delighted by the number of new viewers of our regularly-updated social media pages while we are all enforced to remain apart from our families, and hopefully this newsletter will also help to make our residents and their loved ones feel a little closer at this time.

You might find it interesting to know that recently, whilst reviewing our company's Statement of Purpose, the Directors, along with Sylwia and Ilias, spent some time exploring the virtues that we believe embody the 'Birtley House ethos'. After a while we whittled it down to four words – Kindness, Integrity, Positivity and Adaptability – and we feel that these can be equally applied to our business values as well as to the ideal characteristics we encourage in our staff.

What we hope these four powerful and emotive words encapsulate is an overall picture of all the elements of Birtley House - staff, management, environment - working together to create a life for each of our Residents that is primarily of their choosing, and where they feel safe, cared for and happy.

To do this all the staff must be able to display **Kindness** to all (I don't think anyone could work in the Care industry if they were not intrinsically kind!); have **Integrity** by being honourable, truthful and professional; bring a **Positive** and cheerful attitude to all that they do at Birtley House; and be prepared to be **Adaptable** every day – as anyone here will tell you, no two days are ever the same, and each day is different to how you expect it to be. And this was never truer in today's environment which seems to have sprung up from nowhere!

In an organisation such as ours where we have around ninety staff, each with an important and essential role to fulfil, being able to keep everyone travelling together on the same path is vital, and we will be using these four Birtley House values to help us further improve our service and to enable our staff to continue working towards being the best that they can be. Many of our staff have already proved that they possess these qualities in spades, and we are so grateful for their dedication and support at this difficult time when they might also be anxious about their own family members.



Finally, I would just like to thank our supportive community, the families of our Residents, our staff, and all who are helping us through this strange and torrid time. I wish you all safe keeping through the rest of Spring and into Summer as the warmer weather returns, and I'm looking forward, as we all are, to seeing you again soon.

Frank, Director

Sinéad joins the Board of Directors

There have been a great many changes at Birtley since I first started to work here back in 2010 but what never changes is the feeling that Birtley isn't just any nursing home it is *our Residents' home*.

Having spent many years working 'front of house' at reception I have always been acutely aware of how important that first impression of our Home is. Residents, even if just here for a short stay, want to feel at home and their families want the reassurance that they have made the right choice for their loved one in choosing Birtley House.

In my new role as Resident Liaison Director I hope to have more time to devote to helping with the admission and settlement of new residents whilst still maintaining the close bonds I have built up with our current residents and families over the last 10 years. It seems right now that this connection is more important than ever, so I'm so pleased that we had this in place prior to the virus outbreak.

As a director I aim to spend more time with our residents to find out how they are, answer any questions they might have or concerns about settling into their new environment. I will co-ordinate



with our in-house therapists, including the physios, Lisa, the hairdresser, Kim, the chiropodist, on our residents' behalf and be that point of contact for families, during the initial stages of their relative's move to Birtley, and beyond, as required.

As well as assisting new residents to feel at home, I will be on hand as a continued support for all existing residents to offer help and assistance alongside the rest of the team.

I will also be the line-manager for the Admin/Reception team, and although I will often be seen around the reception area, my new 'home' is in the Annexe Office on the corridor leading to the Annexe sitting room.

And as soon as we're back to normal circumstances, I'd like to say please feel free to come and see me there about anything, however big or small, just behind the sliding door!

**Sinéad,
Resident Liaison Director**

Residents, even if just here for a short stay, want to feel at home and their families want the reassurance that they have made the right choice for their loved one in choosing Birtley House.

Sylwia Indycka looks back on an eventful year to date

Tina, our head of Activities also decided to make light of the masks by sticking funny smiling stickers over them. Laughter was the main aim, but I believe it also helps to reduce the anxieties that are stirred up at the sight of seeing someone in a mask. Whilst we are being as careful as we possibly can be, we must remember to try to have still have fun where we can.



We're all in this together!

Wow, what a year it has been so far. And of course, I say 'Wow' to reflect the surreal nature of the most unanticipated circumstances, we will likely face in our lifetime. The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 crept up on the world, and whilst it continues to break out and is waiting to peak in many countries, it seems its original source, Wuhan province, China, has got a handle on it for the moment, which gives me hope and faith that we will be able to manage this by adhering to all our precautionary measures.

I am thankful at this time to have had some experiences during my time as a Registered Nurse and Nursing Home Manager with the SARS outbreak and later E-coli, Norovirus and Influenzas. At the time, response plans had been put in place and we needed to action them, the difference here is that we have realised the severity very quickly, so we are able to prevent better and manage any outbreak more successfully. For me, my previous experience meant that as the world realised how serious the current Covid-19 situation is, I was better prepared for the decisions we have had to make, and I could advise and guide my team with more confidence through these troubling times.

Let me say, I could not be prouder of our teams across all departments



in the house, and those who are also keeping it together behind the scenes by working from home to help keep us all safe. We have had a very successful recruitment campaign during this time, one of the best ever, and we're working on building a reserve pool of qualified staff to support us. So whilst one of the initial fears was staffing, it seems at the moment that is not a problem. Our teams continue to amaze me, and we have many key workers onsite pulling together and supporting each other, so much so, we've even taken to having frequent sing songs with a quick dance in the front garden to keep our spirits up. Our initial dance session featured us clapping and dancing along to 'We're all in this together' from 2008's popular film, 'High School Musical', it is incredibly



The team at Birtley House social-distanced dancing in our beautiful grounds

of this urge, it means we are appreciating the people in our lives more and making efforts to keep in touch in new and creative ways.

The decision to close our doors to visitors was difficult but the right thing to do and so well received. Whilst it is unclear exactly how long this will be for, I take comfort in the fact that our Residents are not alone, unlike many of the elderly people across the nation at this time. I would like to thank our Residents' family members for all the support and co-operation which we have received in abundance.

**Sylwia Indycka,
Registered Manager**

catchy, and many of us have been singing it since.

As someone who always tries to see the positives in situations, it is good at this point to recognise also that whilst it is an international tragedy causing devastation across the world, both with the illness and the knock on effects in the economy, there have been many positives which have come out of each individual country's lockdown and isolation approaches so far. These include reversing the damage to our planet, and many families being lucky enough to spend some quality time together and reconnecting with those who they are not able to spend time with through technology. Our busy world and lives would never have allowed for this in regular times. When we're told we can't do something, the urge to do it

suddenly seems irrepressible, and whilst we follow the new rules and adapt to the 'new normal' in spite

Also, thank you to Ilias, our Deputy Manager, for his support during these times, we are working well together and I am pleased that as he joined us in December, he was at least able to experience some regularity within the home, before all of this took prominent focus. Together, with the help of our Directors, Ilias, our whole team, and you our Residents, we will continue to evolve and react as appropriate with this journey, and by adhering to procedures and hygiene practices, we will do everything in our power to keep our Residents and Staff safe. And remember, one way or another 'We're all in this together'.



Sylwia and Ilias

Activities

As we were getting into the swing of 2020 and this Newsletter was going to print, we have found ourselves in challenging times which we can't ignore. We didn't however, want to cast a shadow on all of the wonderful and exciting things we had been up to prior to Covid-19 isolation, so we have kept in our original article from the Activities department. We thought it would be nice for our Residents to recall these happier, more carefree times, and for their relatives to read individual messages from some of the team who are now spending even more time with their loved ones.

We are actively adjusting day by day and adapting the activities which we provide. My team and I are doing our utmost to keep everyone upbeat and happy, and we're tailoring each individual's needs and interests on a one to one basis.

One great idea we've put into motion is the picture messages to families, friends and the staff. The residents have loved making the pictures and a lot of thought went into their wording they used.

All our usual programmed activities will not be overlooked. Rather than the residents coming down to join us we'll take the fun to them. Whether it's music, exercises, craft, games or whatever they want, it can be done and with just as much enthusiasm as before but on a one-to-one basis.



As ever, we are so lucky to have such beautiful gardens to take advantage of, so whilst the sun is finally shining after what seems like the longest winter, we will get out there and have our own little private garden parties, wherever possible. We will 'keep calm and carry on!'

Tina Bell,
Head of Activities

What we were up to

How time flies when you're having fun. I can't believe it's almost a year in my new role.

What a smooth transition that was but then it does come easy when you have a good role model and a great team to work with.

So, what to tell you. "I've been converted". Yes converted, I now enjoy poetry afternoons. I hear you giggle and wonder. Poetry was always an activity I would avoid but working full-time now I have learned to embrace it, and I do now enjoy it (to a certain extent). It can be fun and not all doom and gloom. So, watch this space for more poetry afternoons as I know it is loved by many of our residents.

Since our last newsletter the activities room has had a make-over and how lovely it looks. It's more welcoming with fresh colours on the walls and a beautiful mural making a big



pre-covid-19

impact. It now makes for a nice bright room to enjoy the many activities we put on. Music plays a big part in our afternoons and we have recently been really lucky in finding ourselves a new entertainer in John, with his toe-tapping, arms-swaying nostalgic music playing on his juke box. We are very fortunate to be able to add another music entertainer alongside our very popular and regular pianist Kevin Jacot who sings beautifully and plays music to please anyone's ears.

And not forgetting the Carousel Theatre Company who make us laugh and fill us with joy with their comical musical shows. As you know it's not just the music that makes everyone feel good, we have a good variety of activities and whatever we are doing we smile, laugh and have fun and that's what's important. We look forward to welcoming back our outside Entertainers one of these days!



We've also been quite busy helping other organisations

“the RSPB were flabbergasted with the varieties of birds and wildlife we are so lucky to have here at Birtley”

RSPB “British garden birdwatch”

This was welcomed by quite a few of our residents who participated in the “watch” and some of our staff even took it further and took a check list home. All feedback was relayed back to the RSPB who were flabbergasted with the varieties of birds and wildlife we are so lucky to have here at Birtley.



Another success was the “Time for a Cuppa” week. This was an event to raise money for the Dementia Specialist Nurses. A lot of the staff contributed with lots of home-made cakes and biscuits which were purchased for a donation. We had some gorgeous and really tasty cakes and we made a whopping £106.00, so I am very grateful and pleased with everyone who helped.

But I guess the big one I need to share with you all is **“Wheelchair ice skating”**... Yes you read that right. One of our last adventures before lockdown took us to Guildford Spectrum where we had the most amazing time on the ice with five still buzzing and excited residents. It was an experience that we will definitely repeat as soon as we can. So, anything is possible, and we

are always open for new ideas however crazy they seem.

Tina Bell, Head of Activities

Well a year has passed in my role as Menu Taker and Hydration Champion. I have had great fun with you all in the Orangery with lots of laughs, jokes and general discussions. So proud of you all drinking more water/juices and understanding my role as Hydration Champion. Keep drinking!

Jacquie Atter



“Completely unexpected, never been to an ice rink before and I’m 89! It was absolutely amazing, we had such an experience”
Valerie

“A wonderful surprise to go as someone else couldn’t go, I really enjoyed it”
Pat

“I thought it was great! I used to go to watch the ice hockey games in London. I would go again, thought it worked very well”
Judy

“It was very good”
– said with a big smile,
Mavis

“It was exhilarating and enjoyable”
Hugh



I started in a Bank Activities Role initially covering holidays etc in Activities and Menus. I now do 3 days a week as well as covering for the rest of the Activities team on other days when needed. I am thoroughly enjoying my very varied role. The Activities Team is a very energetic, happy and enthusiastic team run under Tina's wonderful guidance. We all share a passion for finding new and exciting things for our lovely

residents to do. No two days are the same and its lovely to bring some laughter and cheer to all our residents.

Jojo Beard



A message from an old friend

A little over 6 months ago I left home to spend time with an old school friend in Paris for 4 days. Instead I took a detour to St. Bartholomew's hospital in London, where I stayed for a whole month and was diagnosed with a heart condition called Takotsubo (broken heart syndrome). While in St Barts the amazing cardiac team started me on the road to recovery. After leaving the hospital I continued my recovery at home with the help from the rehab staff at Milford hospital, RSCH and physios at the Wilfred Noyce Centre in Godalming. December last year saw me returning to St Barts for a check-up, I was told that my recovery was improving but I still needed to take it easy, that is not easy for me as I have always been a person that likes to be busy. Family keep saying, slow down, do that tomorrow but that's hard for me. After Christmas I started to get out more, go for long walks, and visit my parents who had missed me. My daughter Andrea took me for a Spa day at the Lythe Hill Hotel, Haslemere for some pampering which was such a treat! My health has continued on a good path and on the 4th March I returned yet again to St Barts Hospital for more heart tests, and following these I met with my consultant who informed me that my "broken heart" was 99% repaired. My medication has now been reduced and apart from having an MRI scan soon he does not want to see me until next December. I was so very pleased with this news. My family have been brilliant, very supportive. I personally cannot thank everyone enough for their support, well wishes and offers of help. I continue to feel better as each week passes and as soon as we are allowed to travel again, I will rebook my trip to Paris. For now, I will say "Au revoir".

Love Carol x

Carol Downer, previous Activities team member

"I was so very pleased with this news. My family have been brilliant, very supportive. I personally cannot thank everyone enough for their support, well wishes and offers of help"



Carol on the far right

Gardens Review Spring 2020

Matt Miller explains that it's a busy time of year for him - self-isolating out there in the garden



The sun is finally shining, the comforting warmth is banishing memories of a fairly miserable winter and the familiar scents drift across the breeze reminding us all that spring is well and truly underway.

Except this is as far from the norm as I've ever experienced and it's hard for me not to mention it. 'Social distancing', 'self-isolation' and 'lockdown' are the new buzz words on everybody's lips and there is a palpable sense of un-ease all around us. These are unprecedented times that we're all going through and it's touching every aspect of our lives.

However life does go on and new friendships are being forged, communities are coming



together, the undervalued work force is now rightly classed as 'key workers' and this whole experience will define a generation and I believe we will come out the other side a stronger, happier and more understanding society.

I'm fortunate in that I am still able to come to work every day. My self-isolation is spent out in the garden and it's a busy time of year. As a gardener, you get on top of things now or you spend the rest of the year playing catch up. With regular hoeing, edging and grass cutting, Sam and I have got a head start on the routine jobs meaning we can spend a bit more time in the kitchen garden.

Sadly, HALOW and our other volunteer groups are not coming until the lockdown is lifted so it's been up to the 2 of us to get the majority of the crops sewn and the beds prepped for what will hopefully be a successful season. Rhubarb, curly Kale and Purple sprouting Broccoli continue to





look their best and residents, visitors and staff can enjoy them as much as we enjoy working in them. And we can all discuss the year that was 2020.

I would just like to finish by saying a big thank you to all the staff that are on the front line dealing with this health crisis, your work is valued by everybody and I hope we can offer a little haven in the garden to relax and take your mind of things for a couple of minutes at least. And just one final thing, to the incredible people that work in Adult Social Care and the NHS, words will never be able to express how grateful we are and as I've done every Thursday, I applaud you all.

Matt Miller, Head Gardener

provide early season produce. Asparagus will be next and both runner beans and French beans have been sewn directly in the ground along with potatoes and peas. And the tunnel, greenhouse and any other spare cold frames are filled with seedlings of beetroot, courgettes, squash, pumpkins, broccoli, carrots, kale, onions and sprouts all waiting to be transplanted. Also, the garden office is filled with tomato plants waiting for the weather to warm up sufficiently so they can be planted in the tunnel.

Out in the formal gardens I've been gradually filling up gaps in the beds and borders with spare plants, new varieties of perennials and shrubs that I've produced from cuttings. The new wisteria frame in the Secret Garden is slowly filling in with the new growth and although it'll still be a couple of years until it's at its best, it should still give a good show this year. A new wildflower lawn has been created alongside the fruit cages which

once established will have close mown paths cut through it. And the existing wildflower areas have had patches re-sown and will be extended over this coming year.

Happier times are ahead for us all I'm sure, the lockdown will soon lift, and things will be back to normal. Until then we'll keep working hard to ensure when that day does arrive the gardens will



I discovered as a young child that I relished the outdoors, and I always enjoyed helping to grow flowers and vegetables at home.

I joined my school gardening club and I loved it so much that at age fifteen I decided to take on a course in Horticulture one day a week. Continuing my studies at Merrist Wood College I later achieved a B-Tec qualification in Horticulture and Countryside Management, and on gaining practical experience at Sayers Croft in Ewhurst, I knew for sure it was a great path for me to take.

I attended the Surrey Hills Woodfair one year, which was my first visit to the Birtley Estate. Although I loved the Woodfair, I was more impressed with how immaculate and tidy the gardens and grounds were. It really didn't match my perception of a care home, and I just loved being here, it was so peaceful and tranquil, but also varied and vast.

Someone recommended I approach Simon Whalley, and in January 2014 I started at Birtley as a work experience student, which I'm happy later evolved into a permanent position in May 2016. I was thrilled with the opportunity to join Birtley, because the gardens were so



fantastic and I knew I would develop my skills further here. I really couldn't believe my luck. I thoroughly enjoy my job as Assistant Gardener, working together with Matt and under his supervision. We're both keen and we like things neat and tidy so work well together. We have many ideas to keep the gardens interesting and we would love to help create something like a therapy garden one day, which could be used to help Residents.

I enjoy seeing the Residents and their families coming out to enjoy the gardens and grounds, and in the past when the gardens have been opened to the public for events. One of my favourites is the Strawberry Tea in June, fingers crossed this year we can go ahead, and may we have sunshine. It's also rewarding to see the young people from the Halow Project visit regularly to

work in the gardens, grounds and manage the kitchen garden so well. I enjoy helping Matt to guide them and see their new skills grow alongside their confidence.

Winter is now well behind us, and we're watching the garden come to life, with buds opening, butterflies appearing, and ducklings being born. It's a nice reminder that my favourite time of the year, Summer, is around the corner.

I've seen the Estate change so much even in my short time here, and I'm looking forward to being involved in whatever new projects the company decide to do going forward. Apart from working in the rain at times, this job never gets boring, and I am always happy to come to work.

**Sam Millward,
Assistant Gardener,
Birtley House & Estate**

Just a few messages...

Arriving back here at Birtley feels like coming home, in lots of ways the same only this time with a new and exciting role. With the Covid-19 it's a challenging time to be starting but I wish to do the best I can for the residents, my housekeeping team and all the other staff at this most difficult time.

Returning as Housekeeping Manager, I have many ideas of new things I wish to try and implement, some of these will stay on hold for the moment whilst we concentrate on making sure all areas are thoroughly cleaned, and that well used areas have extra cleaning and checking daily. By doing this I hope our Residents will feel safe.

It has been nice to see some old friends of Birtley since being back. I have visited as many of the Residents as possible for a catch up with old friends and introduced myself to those who are new. We have chatted from a distance and I've listened to some good ideas that they have for keeping extra safe at this time. Rest assured everyone, the housekeeping team are eager to do all they can to ensure the safety and cleanliness of our home.

**Carole Fulker,
Head of Housekeeping**



We all know this is a very difficult period for everybody and now, more than ever, we need to support each other, both physically and mentally. Now is the time to be calm, if there is one thing NURSES know how to do, it's how to work under pressure. This is not done for glory or gain, it is done because of our dedication and it is a true vocation.

Viruses come and they go, just like the seasons, that's why we should all continue to work with passion and devotion while using clinical skills, to continue to provide excellent care for our lovely residents.

**Viorica Darie,
Clinical Lead Nurse**



We are all looking forward to enjoying our gatherings again one day and being with our friends and loved ones again! Stay safe, and where you can, please stay home.

Photo taken prior to social distancing

Other News & Celebrations

Barbara Mintz celebrates 20 years as a Mews Warden. Thank you Barbara for your long service and dedication to Birtley and our Residents!



Our first Resident to have a special Birthday during isolation was serenaded outside her apartment, by staff and fellow Residents of the Mews. Mora turned 90 on 3rd April.



We are grateful for some lovely weather of late, nice and warm with a slight breeze. Our gardens are used more as the weather warms up, and we're particularly thankful to have the space we do which allows our Residents to have a social gathering, whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines.



We have kept in touch with our friends at the hallow project. They are all missing their weekly visits to Birtley, and they've sent us some artwork produced by their young people with their very best wishes to everyone!



We've also been in touch with some local schools, and their youngsters have been writing letters for our Residents to enjoy!



We are thankful to live in such an advanced technological age where some staff members can work from home and things can continue relatively smoothly from afar. With the schools closed, some are trying to manage home schooling also, and we appreciate all that they can do in this time.



As many of our readers know, Simon Whalley is also a co-founder of the Surrey Hills Enterprises, a Community Interest Company (CIC) which offers networking opportunities as well as support and guidance to local business start-ups. Many of the businesses under the umbrella have of course been affected by Covid-19, but the connections which have been established prior to this, are now cherished more than ever, as they rally together offering supporting hands and ideas to each other. Many have collaborated in promoting each other's trade, to combine goods in deliveries to the customer bases they have all fought so hard to build. They have in turn, opened themselves up then to new customer markets, which they can hope to further capitalise on once a little normality returns.

Below: Residents have been treated to special lunch dates recently, and we are continuing this where possible. A trip to Venice with a virtual tour down the canal, and another pair had a private dining experience in the Orangery. We have followed with more trips including; a train journey through the Swiss Mountains, and a walk through the Redwood Forest. A very welcome experience for all. We've also 'taken trips' to other countries recently as Simon & Caroline shared their Costa Rica pictures, and RGN Manisha shared a presentation on her trip across the Himalayan mountains.



Reflections on 'Life in Covidia'

As the Covid-19 pandemic began to have a serious impact on our nation, Liz Tilley, our Chaplain, came across the word 'Covidia' to describe the strange and daunting world in which we are currently living.

It was in an article written by The Revd Canon J. John, a well-known Christian speaker and author, entitled 'Comfort in Covidia', March 2020. He describes feeling as though he has mysteriously been pushed through the doors of some magical wardrobe and finding himself gazing at an unwelcome and bewildering landscape, though definitely not C. S. Lewis's Narnia!

Here she and Gail Maguire, our Counsellor share some reflections.

Liz: We all learn so much from the new situations and experiences we encounter, don't we? You were recently in India, Gail, so can you tell us why you went there and an important lesson you learnt?

Gail: We went for a couple of reasons, firstly to visit four charities, two in Kolkata and two in Kerala which we are involved with, and secondly to celebrate my husband's birthday in an eco-retreat in Goa. It goes without saying that arriving in India,



senses are sharpened with the explosions of colours, smells and tastes. I can take myself back there at the drop of a hat! Driving can be a hair-raising experience for the uninitiated, everyone appears to drive with the intention of being the leader of the pack, and no space is too small. Despite the look of chaos, it isn't what it seems, it is awesome to see the levels of humility, humour and absolute lack of road rage. What you quickly learn is that in India, people live in the present and live for the day. The poverty and squalor are unforgivable, but whatever the situation, workers heroically provide for their families, often from the most challenging circumstances. Consequently, the concept of people having to self-isolate in India is based on a very different premise to here. On that note, Liz, how are you coping with the ramifications of the Coronavirus?

Liz: Social distancing and self-isolation with all the restrictions

that places on me and those closest to me, and to my role as Chaplain are very challenging, especially as I live on my own and there is the uncertainty with how long this will go on. I am learning to plan my time carefully, but still struggle some days. I take one day at a time and try to be thankful for small blessings, look for different ways of being in touch with people, have a walk or do some gardening! Perhaps you could give us some help as we respond in our differing ways to a major crisis like this and all the fear it engenders.

Gail: Talking about fear, it is such a real feeling for us all. It is important to keep in contact with people to keep conversations alive. I try my best to keep to routines and maintain a sense of normality. I find it beneficial to reframe thought patterns, so try thinking of this period of self-isolation as a time of opportunity, perhaps to do some of the things that get left! It is also important to practise self-care, try to

undertake some basic exercises, yoga or meditation and limit what you listen to from the media. Many of us may become anxious and worry that we or our families may get ill, this is normal: we mustn't ignore these feelings but acknowledge them, either by talking or writing them down, then try to let them go to both reassure and calm yourself, bringing yourself back to the present moment. Being mindful of these aspects and sleeping and eating well, helps us to remain as robust as possible against anxiety. So, Liz, amidst all the pressures and consequences of this time, you must, like me, be seeing some positive outcomes?

Liz: I am encouraged by the way communities are coming together and offering support to the most vulnerable, by doctors, nurses and carers putting themselves on the line, and coming out of retirement in their thousands to respond to the need, and people spending more time in their gardens and walking in their neighbourhoods rather than jumping into their cars. I am impressed by the way people are using technology to keep in touch or hold meetings. I have linked up with live-streamed services from our church. I have heard for the first time about Zoom and “virtual conferences” enabling people to have online meetings. Residents, I know, have appreciated, not just phone calls,

but video links with relatives. When we get back ‘home’ from Covidia, go back through the wardrobe, using C. S. Lewis’s imagery, and life returns to whatever normality will look like them, what do you hope might stay with us?

Gail: There are so many lessons here, for us all. I hope it is a reminder that we are all interconnected in so many ways. We really are only as safe as the person next to us. I hope this will help us to continue recovering a sense of society. Closer to home, as you touched upon, I have enjoyed being part of the fostering of a renewed community spirit, where we know our neighbours, work colleagues and family members better. I hope that from the self-isolation aspect we are more ‘present’ with those around us and continue to value and appreciate the freedom and beauty in the countryside that is on our doorstep. A long list, but how about you? Do you have some final words?

Liz: Yes, I agree with that. Perhaps we might also remain very appreciative of our health and other essential services, and the dedication and courage of those who work within them, and even use our cars less, or avoid travelling all those miles for a conference, and so continue to improve the environment.



Above: Gail on her trip to India. **Left:** Liz enjoying her gardening.

A time like this brings in to sharp relief that we are not in control and we depend so much on God and on one another. I believe God brings good out of tough situations, joy out of sadness, his help, strength and comfort when we need it, and he can use this crisis to transform us and our societies. He is with us and nothing can separate us from his love. My prayer is that we will find this true for ourselves, that we will go on looking out for others in our communities, and that Birtley house will be an even better place in which to live and work, as we value one another more and become a stronger team.

Liz Tilley, Chaplain & Gail Maguire, Counsellor

Simon Whalley explains that in times of National Emergency – or indeed international crisis – it is important to maintain as much stability as possible.



Simon Whalley, Chairman

Continuity in troubled times

The current Covid-19 pandemic has had an almost unique effect on both healthcare and business as well as most people's social lives. In such circumstances it is important to try and maintain three vital 'Cs':-

- 1 Help all those dear and near to us to keep **Calm**;
- 2 Show **Consideration** to all;
- 3 Maintain **Continuity** of service to all who are dependent on us.

Calmness, Consideration and Continuity – probably the three elements that have characterised our Care business through all the years since my grandfather, Dr Lloyd Driver, first started taking in people with mental health issues to his own home in the 1920s. In two years' time we will celebrate 90 years since the Care Home was first registered and this year marks 75 years since it moved to Birtley House. With just one family owning and running it in all this time I guess Continuity is assured.

We will doubtless find a number of critical issues in coming weeks and months but we have planned for this and expect to be able to provide full support both for our residents and our dedicated and amazing team of nurses, carers and equally important support workers in housekeeping,

catering, maintenance, gardens and activities. We are liaising regularly with residents' families and are so grateful for their understanding and support which helps reduce the potential threat of infection.

This very real sense of Consideration is so important to helping everyone keep Calm but to further assist we can use our experience of coping with previous threats to the business and its residents' well-being – such as the Great Depression of the 1930s; the 2nd World War and the previous global pandemics and financial crises in the last century and this. The Birtley Team are responding really well to the need for everyone to be flexible and help out, with some already training in other skills, such as laundry or meals serving, to ensure that we can cover our residents' needs in times when the need for self-isolation may impact staff numbers. We are also experiencing many new applications to either work or volunteer in the Home from the public where the importance of maintaining Care has fully struck home.

By the time you read this I hope the worst may have passed, though I expect we will continue to need to be very careful (in every sense) for much of the rest of this year and I trust that the three 'Cs' will see us through again.

We are pleased to welcome the following new starters!

Lesley Dean, Care Assistant – Lesley is an experienced care professional and works full time on days.

Maureen Ruddock, Care Assistant. Maureen has previously worked in domiciliary care and has in fact run her own agency in the past. Maureen is working full time on days.

Hayley Roberts, Care Assistant – Hayley has lots of care experience and works part time on days.

Marius Gearap, Chef De Partie – Marius joins the kitchen team.

Namrata Gurung, Housekeeping Assistant. Namrata works full time on days helping to keep Birtley ship-shape and sparkling clean.

Mark Rowley, Resident Driver - Mark has a great sense of humour. He joins the team on a bank contract as Resident Driver, taking charge of the checks of the minibus and when safe to, he will take our Residents out on excursions and to appointments.

Simone Imbriolo-Kelly, Care Assistant - Simone recently moved to Surrey and fell in love with Birtley when she came for an informal show around. She will work full time on days.

As this newsletter goes to print we're also welcoming into the team...

Nicole Wheeler, Care Assistant
Corrine McDonald, Household Support
Ion Bejan, Household Support
Claudia Insuratelu, RGN
Fernanda D'Abreu, Household Support & Care
Lulu Ball, Receptionist

Welcome Back!

Sarah Ragless, Care Assistant – Sarah has lots of experience in care and has worked with us previously so knows Birtley well. She works full time on a split shift with both the night and day care teams.

Mirela Simion – Senior RGN. It's super to welcome Mirela back following her maternity leave, we can't believe that baby Darius turned 1 in April!

Carole Fulker, Housekeeping Manager – Carole returns to Birtley after a brief sojourn with another local care home. She joins us as our Housekeeping Manager, following the departure of our long serving and much-loved colleague Mary Hoade who retired after over 20 years of loyal service.



Congratulations!

Happy Retirement to **Mary Hoade**, we will miss you and look forward to you visiting one day hopefully soon.

Bonita Mubaiwa, who has now joined the Nursing team as an RGN on a full time basis.

Julie Eagleton has been promoted to the role of **Care Delivery Co-ordinator/Induction Buddy.** Julie's new role is to firmly establish a robust and thorough induction programme for new starters joining our Care Team. Liaising closely with the HR and the Management Teams, she will help identify and deliver our training and development goals for both new and existing care staff.

Farewell and the Very Best of Luck to!
Aurimas Virsulis, Chef.
Winston Belono, Care Assistant.
Mary Hoade, Housekeeping Manager.
Natalia Drzazgowska, RGN.
Wendy Bicknell, Receptionist
Holly James, Well-being Companion
Tina Mubaiwa, Lead Care Assistant



Another way to keep in touch

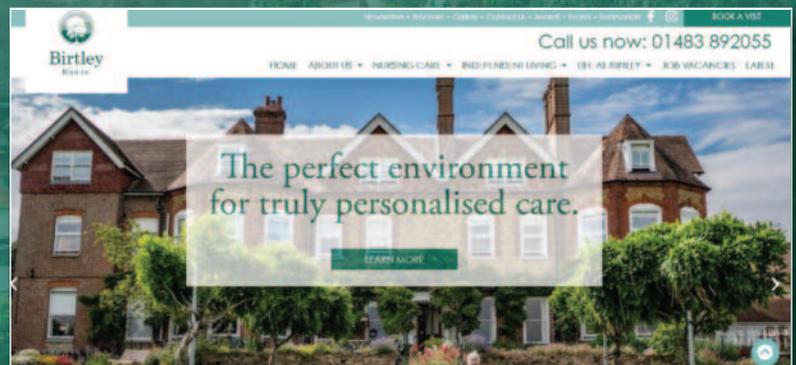


It seems our ongoing Social Media efforts have been working well recently, we're reaching far and wide across the Surrey county and to Residents family

members everywhere. We've had some lovely feedback and seen a real surge in followers on our Facebook page recently. We will continue to share online, as well

as through our new email marketing system which is now also set up to keep you up to date with fresh news on a more regular basis.

If you haven't seen it already, our new website went live earlier in the year and is proving to be well received. Much more up to date, responsive and user friendly. We also have some wonderful pictures on there of the grounds, staff and of our Residents who kindly agreed to feature, so thank you!



**And one final message from one of our Residents
'Keep your chins up everyone!'**



Birtley
House

Birtley House Nursing Home, Birtley Road, Bramley, Guildford, GU5 0LB
info@birtleyhouse.co.uk 01483 892 055

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