

# Achieving Potential

The newsletter for The SLC Group

## Supporting Creativity

Encouraging the people we support to follow their passions, whatever they may be, is at the heart of the SLC Vision.

### Chief Executive's Message



At The SLC Group we are extremely proud of the achievements of the people we support, who through their own determination continuously overcome adversity in order to live their lives to the fullest.

From a Chief Executive's point of view I hear about many exciting and wonderful stories which I believe really capture our vision of creating a culture where the people we

support and the people who work for us are supported to achieve their potential.

I am therefore delighted to introduce our first ever stakeholder newsletter – designed to capture our vision and to provide a platform for our stakeholders to share stories, experiences and news from across The Group.

In this edition we meet John Norris (page 5) who has just moved into his own tenancy and is starting on his path to independence. We also meet Anne who has discovered a passion for learning (page 2) and take a trip down the aisle with Vicky and Anthony Kay (page 3).

The introduction of our Assessment Centre has been essential in boosting our recruitment drive and enabling us to identify high quality staff. You can find out more about this new style of recruitment on page 5 and also hear from Ian Norbury who shares his experiences of recruiting his own staff team.

As ever, your contribution is vital. This newsletter is for you and about you and, as such, could not be produced without your involvement. If you would like to contribute to the next edition of this newsletter, or have any comments on how it can be improved, get in touch with Lyndsay Milne on 01257 246 400 or email [lyndsay.milne@theslcgroup.co.uk](mailto:lyndsay.milne@theslcgroup.co.uk)

You can also write to Lyndsay at Mitchell House, King Street, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3AN

*Charles*

Charles Eggleston  
Chief Executive



Getting involved in creative projects not only provides a valuable outlet for self expression, but can be a highly effective means of therapy. This has certainly proven to be the case for David Robinson, who has Asperger's and has recently facilitated an Arts, Creativity and Empowerment course for Local Authorities and Providers of Social Health Care, to promote the many creative approaches to the arts in and around personalisation.

Catherine Titherington, Course Organiser and Director of Voice Social Marketing Ltd said: "David was introduced to Voice by The SLC Group as being a strong advocate in promoting painting as a great expression of thoughts and creativity, so we invited him along to tell his story and participate in the workshop. David did this very successfully taking centre stage at the event - no mean feat - confidently explaining his story and how art has become part of his life. We had some great feedback from the participants who thought David was an inspiration and who now want to incorporate art into their everyday activities with the people they support".

Since discovering art, David has found it to be an integral part of managing his mental health and his talent has blossomed. He's showcased his work across Lancashire, including BBC Radio Lancashire's studios in Blackburn and has been a member of the 'Art 4 U' group since 2008. Chatting about his day with 'Voice Marketing' David said: "On the day I talked about the motivation behind my art work in promoting tenant influence and creating awareness of autism. I also explained to people the reasons why I started at my art group and I believe people on the course learnt the importance of how art work can improve mental wellbeing. I got a lot out of the day. It would be nice to think that my involvement inspired others to become interested in art and in doing so improved their well-being"

[www.voicemarketing.org.uk](http://www.voicemarketing.org.uk)

Anne Greenhalgh (right) with SLC Lead Locality Manager Nicola Ruff



Anne Greenhalgh has been living with a degenerative condition which has affected her speech and movement since she was 12 years old. Now aged 32 she wants others to benefit from her experiences and is currently training to be a counsellor so she can build on her academic achievements and fulfil her zest for learning.

# Anne's our inspiration

We went to meet Anne at her flat in Skelmersdale, West Lancashire, where she is supported by The SLC Group to live independently. Anne has Fredericks Ataxia – a rare condition which affects her nervous system. People with Fredericks are affected in many different ways but the major symptoms include a lack of coordination, problems with speaking, a decrease in reflexes and heart muscle disease.

Anne explains: "Everything just takes a bit longer. I have to use a wheelchair now and the condition is degenerative – but each person is different and you can't say exactly what is going to happen. You just learn to live with it. Sometimes I have bad days, other times I have good days. It really does depend on my frame of mind and what I have going on in my life at the time."

Nicola Ruff is an SLC Lead Locality Manager and has worked closely with Anne to ensure her support is suited to her needs. Nicola says: "Since we began supporting Anne three years ago her support has changed considerably. It is now directed by Anne and we plan rotas and support hours around what suits Anne – not what suits us - and that is key."

Anne agrees. "My support works well. It is really important to me that my family, friends and my support staff get along and are comfortable in my home, and with each other. At the moment there is a great mix of people in my life which works well."

Like Anne, many people with Fredericks begin to develop symptoms in mid childhood Anne was 12 years old when she first developed symptoms. "Sometimes I feel angry and can get down when I think of all the physical things I used to do like dancing and chorus line singing. But this is the way life is and I deal with it and live my life the best way I can. I think that's why I have focussed so much on my studies as it was one thing I could and can always do."

With a joint honours degree in Criminology, Disability and Community Studies and an MA in Human Rights and Justice, Anne is no stranger to study. "I really enjoy studying. It is something I can do in my own time and I just seem to have the knack for learning."

Anne is currently completing an NCFE Level 2 in Counselling. "I am really enjoying this new counselling course. This is almost complete and will lead to the Level 3 course, which I am due to start in September, and then onto a diploma."

Anne not only enjoys counselling but believes it is something she can do as a way to give something back.

"Because of my health needs I need to find a job with flexible hours.

I volunteer with the Samaritans and so I have lots of experience, but in order to get a paid job you need to have a qualification."

With her counselling course Anne can continue volunteering to increase her real life experiences whilst taking part in more formal training to develop her skills and gain

the qualifications she will need to get paid work in the future.

Anne attends college on her own each Monday night and is in the process of looking into one of SLC's Support Workers attending with her. Anne explains "As the course gets more intense I have found I have had to repeat things and part of my condition is that my voice gets softer so it can be hard for other people to understand me at times."

Nicola says: "A staff member could attend college with Anne to support her to communicate with her peers and her tutors as required. It will just be that extra support that Anne thinks will be useful as her course gets more intense." Again these decisions will be led by Anne. "She is one of the most determined people I have ever met and a real inspiration." adds Nicola.

"Sometimes I have bad days, other times I have good days"

**Would you like to share your experiences or story with us? Get in touch with Lyndsay Milne on 01257 246 400 or email [lyndsay.milne@theslcgroup.co.uk](mailto:lyndsay.milne@theslcgroup.co.uk)**

## WELCOME TRAFFORD!



John Groarke with  
Lead Locality Manager  
Deana Whittle

This spring was also a new start for The SLC Group as we launched our first supported living services in Trafford. Working in partnership with Trafford's Social Care and Supporting People Teams, we now support 12 individuals and have a new staff team who joined us on the 1st March.

Our two new services are located in Altrincham and provide 24 hour support to 12 individuals with learning disabilities and autism. The staff team have transferred from another provider to The SLC Group and our HR team have also recruited new staff in the area - creating a brand new staff team with a huge focus on driving forward positive outcomes for the individuals in these new SLC Trafford services.

Deana Whittle is Lead Locality Manger and has been included in the whole transition process, she says: "The services have been given a whole new lease of life. The staff team are fantastic and the new people recruited to work alongside them really compliment the current staff team."



SLC Support Worker Carl Mountain (right) with running buddy.

## Marathon Man

**SLC Support Worker Carl Mountain is running a series of marathons throughout 2010 including; London, Belfast, Edinburgh and Chester to raise money for children with life-threatening medical conditions.**

Carl is running for The Make A Wish Foundation – a charity who work with children undergoing complex medical treatments to make their dreams and wishes come true.

In between working for our SLC services in Liverpool, Carl has been taking part in grueling training sessions to ensure he is up to the challenge. With two marathons left to complete Carl is looking to beat his personal best of 3 hours and 14 minutes.

**Well done and good luck Carl!**

You can find out more about The Make a Wish Foundation on line at [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org)

To sponsor Carl get in touch with him on **0151 226 1213** or **07897 816055**

## Tiers all round!



**Vicky and Anthony have a learning disability and, after being supported by The SLC Group to live in an apartment project, have now got married and moved into their own house. We went to meet Mr and Mrs Kay to talk moving house, married life and pre-wedding jitters. Here's what they had to say:**

**Q - So, tell us all about your big day!**

**Vicky:** "It was a lovely day, although the morning of the wedding I felt sick, shaky and pale – I was so nervous. Then I put my dress on and felt ok. Daddy walked me down the aisle, he was so proud, and I saw Anthony looking very smart in his suit."

**Anthony:** "She looked like a princess in her dress."

**Vicky:** "My mum and all her friends were very teary as we said our vows and during the dinner I made a speech thanking mum and everyone who had made the day possible."

**Q - So what's it like living together and how are you settling into your new home?**

**Anthony:** "It was nerve racking being in the house on our own for the first night, but we had the number for the On Call Manager and the office at Marble Court (SLC Apartment project) and in the end we just got used to it."

**Vicky:** "We looked around quite a few houses until we found this one. Three weeks before we were married staff told us we could move in. I had my fingers crossed and was jumping up and down. After that it was all stations go, packing boxes and sorting out furniture, as well as planning the wedding!"

**Q - How did Anthony propose?**

**Vicky:** "We got engaged on Valentine's Day. Anthony made me a meal in his flat and then got down on one knee. I wasn't prepared and went bright red!"

**Q - So what's it like being married?**

**Vicky:** "I can't get used to saying 'my husband' – it's funny...I think the hardest thing about being married is remembering that my surname has changed – other than that I love it!"

The SLC Group has worked with over 60 young people and their families in the last five years to move out of their family home or residential college and into their own home - enabling young people with a range of disabilities to begin their path to real independence.



John with Support Worker Maria Hughes

John Norris moved out of his family home in March and is now supported by The SLC Group to live in a shared supported living tenancy in Liverpool. We went to meet John to hear all about the big move and how he has put himself in control of the whole process.

John moved into his new home on 15th March and over the last few months has been busy buying new things and making it home. "This is my room," John says showing me a large room covered in Liverpool FC memorabilia. "I picked it because you can see the garden."

John had first pick of the rooms in the large detached bungalow in Croxteth Park, Liverpool, as his two housemates were moving in at the end of April. The three housemates are tenants in their new home with SLC providing 24 hour support based on their individual and specific needs.

"John was living with his mum before," explains SLC Locality Manager, John Taylor. "Together with his mum he looked around quite a few houses and met with a number of support providers over the past 12 months."

Taking control hasn't stopped at John (Norris) choosing his house or support provider. He has also helped recruit his staff team and facilitate their training sessions - making sure he has been fully involved and in control of setting up his service at The SLC Group.

"Because John receives a high level of personal care and support it is vital that the staff working with John share similar interests". John (Taylor) explains: "Finding the right type of person to support you is vital and for someone like John, who is very active and has a high level of personal support, getting involved in picking your staff team is key." John (Taylor) adds.

John (Norris) interviewed his own staff - attending an assessment centre with his mum at SLC's Merseyside office in Netherton. It was here he first met one of his Support Workers Maria Hughes.

"I met Maria on the day" says John (Norris). "I remember she was really nice but I can't remember what questions I asked her!"

"I remember what he asked me!" laughs Maria who is supporting John today. "I was so nervous. John asked me lots of questions, things like; 'do I like playing Nintendo Wii?', 'can I cook?' ...that threw me as I am not great at cooking. But that

didn't matter to John and since he has moved in we have been learning together - so far John likes my tuna pasta bake the most!"

And it's not just cooking skills that are being developed... John (Norris) and his newly recruited support team have also been working together to develop their experiences and knowledge by taking part in a number of training sessions.

John (Taylor) explains: "Prior to coming to The SLC Group, John had completed a first aid training course and was keen to get involved in some other types of training." Over the last few months John (Norris) has topped up his skills with medication training and moving and handling. "He attended these sessions with his new support team and had plenty of fun along the way," adds John (Taylor).

John has made a great start in his new home and by getting involved in setting up his new service has put himself fully in control of his support and new life.

## CALLING ALL BUDDING FILM MAKERS...

Are you supported by The SLC Group? Would you like to get involved in helping us make a DVD?

We will be filming later in the year and are looking for people to come along and take part in helping us make a DVD about our services, the people we support and our staff.

We want this to be led by you, the people we support, so we are inviting you to come along to help us out...and also have some fun along the way...

### Behind the scenes...

If you don't want to be in front of the camera you can still get involved. We are also looking for people to help us out with the making of the film. This is your chance to be a sound man for the day, to find out how to make a film and get a first hand experience about making a DVD.

If you are interested in getting involved get in touch with Lyndsay Milne on **01257 246 400**, email **lyndsay.milne@theslcgroup.co.uk** or write to Lyndsay at Mitchell House, King Street, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 3AN.



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# The SLC Factor

## About our Assessment Centre

Last year The SLC Group launched Recruitment Assessment Centres and over the last 18 months they have played a key role in helping us identify new talent within the Social Care sector.

### What is an Assessment Centre?

Assessment Centres are used for recruitment at all levels, enabling us to 'cherry pick' from the best, be it a new Support Worker or a Regional Operations Director. A new style of recruitment - the Assessment Centre provides potential staff with the opportunity to learn more about the role on offer. It includes a variety of exercises such as: group activities, individual written tasks and one to one interviews. This approach means we can assess the potential of candidates and find out if they match The SLC Group's Vision and Values.

### Getting involved...

Involving the people we support in recruitment and effective staff matching is a priority for The SLC Group. The people we support, individuals, their families and/or advocates, frequently take part in Support Worker Assessment Centres helping us to recruit the right staff to join The SLC Group.

## Meet Angela

After working for over 20 years as an engineer, a change of career has allowed Angela Fleming, an SLC Senior Support Worker, to find her dream job.

Angela is a Senior Support Worker at one of The SLC Group's supported living services.

"Before I started working for the SLC Group I had never done a support role or even a care role before in my life - it was completely new. I had worked in engineering for over 20 years. I left school at 16 and got my first job on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and developed my career from there, specialising in precision engineering of jet engines."

"In 2008 a health issue meant I couldn't continue working in my current role and I was devastated - it was all I knew. I was talking to a family friend one day and she suggested I try support work in the Health and Social Care Sector."



## Meet Salmat

Salmat Mohammed is one of our Support Workers in Trafford. Salmat joined The SLC Group via an Assessment Centre in March. Here she tells us how she is loving every minute of her new found role...

"Before joining The SLC Group I had only worked in factories, so support work is all new to me and I'm loving it!"

## Meet Ian

Ian Norbury is supported by The SLC Group to live in his own flat in West Lancashire. He attended an assessment centre in April and wrote to tell us all about it:



"My friend and I went with the Locality Manager to the central office in Chorley. We met the people who were being interviewed. They introduced themselves and the staff talked about certain roles to take when applying for a job. We worked with the applicants on an assessment. We were given a situation and had to come up with solutions as to how to sort out a problem. Then we went into three groups, with one applicant per group, and we discussed how we would tackle the situation.

The applicants also told us why they were interested in this kind of work. We enjoyed the day. The applicants were very co-operative and they were keen to become Support Workers.

I learned a lot about how staff are recruited and was pleased to be part of the selection process."

"I saw a job advertised at The SLC Group and applied. After attending an interview I was successful and was delighted.

"However after the initial high I was worried as I didn't know if it was the right thing for me - I needn't have worried. After my induction training and first few shifts I fell in love with the job!"

Angela progressed to a Senior Support Worker position in September 2009 after attending a Development Centre for Support Workers and has recently taken up an Acting Locality Manager role in West Lancashire.

"I love my job here at Hoscar Moss and love supporting Tom. You can't put it into words. To see Tom smile and to see you giving someone that pleasure and making them happy is so fulfilling" says Angela.

"Tom doesn't communicate verbally but after supporting him for over a year now I know exactly how he is feeling and what he wants through his actions and expressions and to see his face light up when I come on shift is the only sign I need that this is definitely the right job for me. In a way it's quite selfish - doing something you love so much and getting paid for it!"

"The assessment centre was a great experience. I really enjoyed the group discussions because I felt I was given the opportunity to show off my skills in the exercises we did.

"I also found the training that I received fantastic, such as how to administer medication, as it gave me the confidence to provide the level of care which is expected of us."

The Lead Locality Manager for Salmat's services, Deana Whittle said: "Salmat was a great find - she's very enthusiastic and flexible and has gained a strong grasp of person centred approaches. I think she's a great example of the effectiveness of the Assessment Centres in enabling us to identify potential members of staff who will add value to our team."





Jonathan Tomlinson and Mary Weld Blundell



Group photo left to right: Marion Harvey, Kelly Dugdale (SLC Staff), Mary Weld Blundell, Chris Staves (SLC Staff) Desmond Stowe, Jonathan Tomlinson

# An SLC Stampede!

It was monkey magic as our pack of SLC animal lovers took Knowsley Safari Park by storm. In May, 29 of our Supported individuals from across Lancashire and ten members of SLC support staff, gathered in the glorious sunshine for an action packed day out at the park.

SLC Locality Manager Barrie Pilling organised the trip, he said: "It was a great day and the weather was fantastic. There was a huge variety of animals at the park and everyone had their favourites. We loved the monkeys when they climbed on the coach and the baby baboons were a massive hit!"

"Once we'd been through the park we left the coach and spent three hours walking around the gardens, enjoying the fun fair and watching the sea lion show. Some individuals just relaxed and soaked up the sun and it was a great opportunity for everyone to meet new friends and get to know one another - which is what these trips are all about!"

Barrie will be planning another trip this time to Chester Zoo later in the year. If you're interested in coming along contact Barrie on **0773 6081 022** or email him at **barrle.pilling@theslcgroup.co.uk**

We're sure it'll be a roaring success!



## WE'RE TWEETING

You can now follow The SLC Group on twitter at **www.twitter.com/slcgroup** If you have a twitter account make sure you start following us or set up your own account by going to **www.twitter.com**



## SLC BLOG

Keep up to date with all the latest developments from The SLC Group via our blog.

Here you can receive regular updates, take part in discussions and share ideas about issues within the Social Care sector.

Go to **www.theslcgroup.co.uk/blog**

## New beginnings in Birmingham

In September we will be launching our first ever services in the West Midlands. As part of a tendered contract The SLC Group will be supporting individuals across Birmingham with a range of physical disabilities, sensory impairments and mental health needs.

The current staff teams will be transferring over to The SLC Group over the next 12 months and we are in the process of working in partnership with Birmingham City Council's Supporting People Team and the current service providers to drive forward this process.

We look forward to finding out more about the staff teams and supported individuals over the coming months and are excited to be welcoming the new team into The SLC Group.