

# Achieving Potential

The newsletter for The SLC Group

## Award Winner

**Congratulations to Signposts' Support Worker, Duncan Roberts, who has won a prestigious 'I Care Award' for Most Outstanding Newcomer to Social Care.**



Andrew Mellor and Duncan Roberts

## Chief Executive's Message



As we enter the New Year it's a great time to celebrate the successes and achievements of the people we support and our staff team, which is what our stakeholder newsletter is all about.

In this edition you can catch up with the latest news from Birmingham on pages six and seven and meet two new members of staff from our hearing impairment services.

We also take a return trip to Trafford on page two to see how these services are progressing nine months on.

Organisationally, 2010 was a great year for The SLC Group. As well as the launch of our Birmingham based services and our new Trafford services, we're proud to have merged with Merseyside organisation Signposts – you can meet some of the individuals and staff from Signposts on page four.

We're driving forward our focus on improving communications and stakeholder involvement and have conducted our first ever stakeholder survey aimed at capturing the views of staff, individuals and their families. We've had some really great feedback, which will help us to move forward as an organisation, so thank you to everyone who took part. Look out for copies of the results brochure coming soon.

As we move forward into 2011 we have a growing staff team, and I'm looking forward to drawing on their experience and expertise so that even more people across The SLC Group can continue to achieve their potential.

Finally, your feedback is essential in the creation of this document, so if you would like to be involved in the next newsletter or require this document in audio, large text or braille, please get in touch with Kirsty Williams on 01257 246400 or email [kirsty.williams@theslcgroup.co.uk](mailto:kirsty.williams@theslcgroup.co.uk)

*Charles*

Charles Eggleston  
Chief Executive



The 'I Care Awards' promote excellence in the social care sector, with the aim to recognise the everyday activities workers undertake to improve the quality of life of many vulnerable individuals.

Duncan joined Signposts just over a year ago, having never worked in the sector, and now works across two services in Merseyside supporting individuals with a range of needs.

Service Manager Ruth Neeson says: "Duncan is the kind of Support Worker you dream about finding! He always goes the extra mile for the people he supports, he recently supported one individual to find voluntary employment (fulfilling a real ambition for the individual) and when two individuals showed an interest in using adapted bicycles, he took the time to be trained as a facilitator for adapted bikes, so they can access them whenever they choose to."

It is this enthusiasm and dedication that impressed the judges and resulted in Duncan being named 'Most Outstanding Newcomer' in November at a Prestigious Award Ceremony at Liverpool Marriott Hotel in Liverpool.

Ruth adds: "We are delighted that Duncan has been recognised for this award – he should be very proud of his achievements."

# Trafford: Nine months on...

March saw the launch of our Trafford services so we recently took a trip back to find out how it's all going nine months on.



In the initial stages of the transition period, The SLC Group's transition team worked closely with the current staff team to ensure the continued well being of the twelve individuals transferring to our services. Working in partnership with families and Local Authorities we ensured the personalisation of each individual's service to establish an ethos of choice and control.

This team have since handed the baton over to newly appointed Trafford Locality Manager Marg Edwards, who has wasted no time getting stuck in. Marg has implemented a number of changes to ensure continued personalisation of the services, including the recent launch of a relaxation room at Stokoe Avenue.

Marg says: "The relaxation room was previously used as an office, which we didn't feel was an appropriate thing to have in someone's home. So the individuals decided to create a relaxation room and clubbed together to buy massage chairs, bean bags and special lighting."

Senior Support Worker Kath Nulty helped the tenants design the room and some family members also got involved. "So far it's been a great success and the individuals love it. We also got rid of things like signing in books which gave the locations a more residential feel, which isn't what we're about." Adds Marg.

The next key project at the service includes working with the Assistive Technology Team at Trafford Council to look at further increasing independence and promoting the personalisation of the service.

**Family feedback and involvement has been a key factor into the success of the services in Trafford. Here two family members tell us of their experiences:**

"I've nothing but praise for Paragon (SLC) and particularly the Senior Support Worker at Stokoe. Nichola has previously had to cope with a lot of agency staff workers but now has a consistent staff team. She's very happy and active."  
MR JONES

# SLC Fright Night

In the true spirit of Halloween individuals and staff from across Blackburn, Darwen and Accrington gathered at the ICI Club in Darwen for a truly spooktacular evening. Thank you for sharing your pictures!



"We're very happy with the service our daughter receives. The key thing for Anne Marie is consistency of staff as she struggles to adjust to new people. She now has this and is very happy. She gets on well with the staff team in place, who make sure that her life is full, taking her on trips to the Trafford Centre and making sure that she gets to her day centre."  
MR BOLTON

## St John's Songbird

Supported individual Anna Marie Livesey of St John's Green in Leyland has been lighting up the singing circuit recently, performing at concerts across Lancashire to raise money for charities REACH and Help the Heroes.



Anna discovered her new found passion for singing with North West based organisation Musicability, which holds a variety of workshops aimed at involving people in music, whatever their musical ability may be. Anna's love of singing has led her to perform in venues such as Chorley Town Hall and the Leyland Civic Centre where she recently sang in front of 150 people, including the Mayor and Mayoress.

Locality Manager Sharon Nicholson says: "Musicability has been so good for Anna. To see her perform in front of that many people feels like a real achievement as she would never have done this a year ago. We're really proud of her."

Anna's last performance was on the 27th November at Chorley Town Hall, together with Nicola Kay and Tracey Lambert, who are also supported by The SLC Group in Leyland. Friends, housemates and family gathered to watch the group perform in their pre-Christmas extravaganza in a bid to raise cash for the Charity 'Help the Heroes'.

## Losing Weight Feeling Great



**At The SLC Group we believe that a healthy diet and exercise are essential in improving well being. With this in mind, we'd like to congratulate Ian Norbury on losing over four stone in weight. Trading fatty foods for salads and gym sessions, here Ian tells us, in his own words, about his new found enthusiasm for healthy living.**

"I began by cutting down on fatty foods and found that I was losing weight. I have also done a lot of exercise at the gym and instead of taking public transport I now walk into town and have been going on lots of walks with staff. When I decided to lose weight I had a chat with my staff team and they have been helping me by keeping track of what I eat. My diet now includes lots of chicken, salads, fruit and vegetables. I am very grateful for the support that staff have given me in achieving my goal."

Angela Fleming, Ian's Locality Manager says "We're so proud of Ian and what he's achieved, he looks great and is so much healthier and active. It just shows what you can do with a bit of determination."

## Delivering Innovation



**We're always on the lookout for new initiatives so the people we support can maximise their personal budgets and manage their money more independently.**

With this in mind we've recently launched Tuxedo - The SLC Group's new money management scheme.

Helen Hilditch, Group Finance Manager explains: "Every person we support under SLC's appointeeship scheme has been issued with a Tuxedo card. The amount they require is then loaded onto the card and they can use the card each week to withdraw money from a cash machine, pay for items over the counter or use on the internet."

This new approach allows live budgeting, significantly reduces any risks associated with carrying large amounts of money and increases choice and control for the people we support.

Helen adds: "The Tuxedo card also provides a full transaction history to further empower the people we support to improve their money management skills."

Charles Eggleston, SLC Chief Executive said: "Our investment in Tuxedo has ensured that The SLC Group's appointeeship service for the people we support promotes independence and is even more transparent.

"It is empowering the people we support to manage their own finances and to develop the skills to manage their own money over time. This initiative fits right into the health and social care sector's personalisation agenda and we are delighted to be working in partnership with Tuxedo to drive forward this innovative approach to money management."

**For more information go to [www.tuxedomoneysolutions.com](http://www.tuxedomoneysolutions.com)**



# A Day Out with Signposts

Liverpool based organisation Signposts joined The SLC Group in June and we are delighted to welcome them to the SLC team.

## Borella Road Service



Grace Abdulai  
Support Worker,  
Vicky Hedderick  
and Claire Hignett  
Team Leader

**We pop into Borella Road, home to Yvonne, Vicky and Sue, for a quick chat with the housemates and to meet some of Signposts staff team. There's a great atmosphere in the house and it's clear that there's never a dull moment.**

Claire Hignett is Team Leader and has worked at this location for five years, she says: "There's a real diversity of need in this particular tenancy. Yvonne requires an intensive level of support whereas Sue and Vicky are more independent."

Despite the differences in support the ladies have lots in common. "The three housemates go out all the time for meals together and everyone went on holiday to Blackpool earlier this year which was great."

The staff team are on hand to support the three housemates to achieve their goals and it's clear that activities are high on the agenda. "We are supporting Yvonne, Vicky and Sue to go and see Westlife at Liverpool's Echo Arena in March and at the moment everyone is busy getting ready for Christmas and finalising arrangements for visiting family and friends."



Roy Bagen and Richard Beecroft

Richard Beecroft, 26, has Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CDLS) and is supported by Signposts to live in his own tenancy in Liverpool. We went to meet Richard and his staff team to find out how they have been working proactively to find out more about this rare condition and, in turn, support Richard to achieve his potential.

Roy is the team leader at Richard's service and has supported him for over six years. He says "I really enjoy working with Richard. He's non verbal however myself and his staff team have worked with him for a number of years and we can tell how he is feeling via the sounds and gestures that he makes."

Richard's staff team are certainly proactive and have attended conferences related to Richard's condition to gain greater insight into CDLS. Service Manager Hayley explains: "The staff team are always on the lookout for new information about Richard's condition. They have recently signed up to a study with Birmingham University on CDLS and as a result are continuously learning new things about the condition which assists them in supporting Richard."

Roy Bagen agrees: "Richard is very sociable and we feel the conferences have changed his life for the better. We've learnt that he's actually quite independent in comparison to other people with CDLS and we have also learnt things about medication which have made a massive difference to Richard and his health."

Richard is certainly sociable and his home, in the heart of Liverpool City Centre, is the perfect location for him to revel in the crowds and the atmosphere of the nearby shops and attractions.

**To learn more about CDLS visit [www.cdls.org.uk](http://www.cdls.org.uk)**

# TENANT INFLUENCE

Are you living in your own tenancy? If so you could have the opportunity to become a member of The Progress Care Housing Association Forum. Here David Robinson, who is an advocate for tenants' rights and plays an active role in influencing PCHA decisions, provides a write up on his experiences as a member of the PCHA Forum.

"I was approached by Progress Care Housing Association to become involved in a local forum on how PCHA was run. I have been involved with the Lancashire Forum since 2007, and one of their first achievements was a "do's & don'ts" poster to combat Anti-Social Behaviour, emphasising that all PCHA tenants had certain rights and responsibilities that they signed in their tenants' agreement.

Coming to the forum was definitely the right thing to do as I have taken advantage of the many opportunities offered to play an active role in assisting Progress Care make their policy decisions. There are many opportunities now to become involved and we'd welcome any keen tenant who has the motivation to help PCHA in making these policy decisions."

# NORTH WEST ADVENTURES

Matt Higham is an SLC Bank Staff member and has supported a number of service users across Merseyside to take part in outdoor pursuits, including abseiling, archery and rock climbing.

Matt has also co-ordinated a recent charity abseil, involving Stuart Thompson (see article back page), to raise money for Ormskirk and Southport Hospital.

**For more information on how you can get involved in activities like this contact Matt via his organisation, North West Adventures, at [www.northwestadventures.co.uk](http://www.northwestadventures.co.uk) or get in touch with Regional Operations Manager Anne Marie McMahon on 01257 246 400 for more information.**

## Caroline Connelly

### Achieving her Potential

**Caroline Connelly's service transferred to The SLC Group following the launch of our new services in Birmingham. A strong character, Caroline's not afraid to speak her mind and is adamant that she wants to be defined for who she is and not in terms of her disability.**



Caroline says "I feel that when people look at me, they just see my disability, but the people that are close to me see the real me, which is what I want others to see."

When it comes to achieving her dreams, Caroline lets nothing stand in her way; including campaigning for improved disabled access, Caroline is also an active member of Birmingham's Supporting People Inclusion team and has travelled across Europe and America.

"Improving disabled access is important to me. One example is my favourite restaurant which had really poor disabled access. Due to the fact I was in a wheelchair, I had to be served outside – which is appalling."

Caroline appealed to her local council and after several attempts her appeal was heard. "They finally made the door wider, as well as some other adjustments to make

it more accessible." Caroline explains. "It is these small things that make such a huge difference to people with disabilities and what my campaigning is all about."

Caroline has also taken a course in journalism and is using her skills to promote her views by writing articles for local newspapers about disabled rights.

"I haven't had the easiest of lives but writing provides a great outlet for me to express myself. I just have to keep going. I'm like that song" she laughs "I get knocked down, but I get up again. With The SLC Group, I now have the support that I need and feel that I can really move forward" says Caroline.

She has certainly been invaluable in helping The SLC Group move forward in Birmingham and has taken time out to help recruit Support Workers for the new services across the City.

It was so nice for me to be a part of this process and I felt for the first time that I had some control of my future, regarding the support that I receive. I would be interested in taking part in more voluntary opportunities after having a taster of such a great process."

Now that Caroline has the right support she feels hopeful for the future; "I'm now looking at pursuing a drama course, which is something I've always wanted to do and am just generally excited about my life moving forward. I've kept a smile on my face for so long, but the difference is that now, the smile is genuine."

**To find out more about recruiting at The SLC Group speak to the manager at your service.**

## Update from the Midlands

In September we launched our first ever services in Birmingham – supporting people from within the city’s blind and deaf communities and individuals with mental health needs and physical disabilities.



Nana Heath and Suki Bains

# Meet the new staff team

**Following the first wave of these new services, we’d like to welcome two new stars to the mix. Support Workers Nana Heath and Suki Bains transferred to us via the TUPE process and have since been integral in the success of our Birmingham based deaf services. Here they tell us how they are embracing new tasks and responsibilities with enthusiasm and using their considerable knowledge to improve the lives of the people we support.**

Nana says “When we first found out about the transfer we were so nervous, we didn’t know about The SLC Group or what they were about, but it’s turned out so well. We’ve been made to feel so welcome and are really enjoying taking on more responsibilities.”

Suki agrees: “When we moved we were so nervous but then we realised that we could really make a difference at The SLC Group. I feel like my confidence has grown so much and my skills have developed.”

Nana and Suki have been working with SLC Managers to carry out assessments of people’s support needs across the transferring services, as well as getting involved in the recruitment process and assessing the BSL skills of new staff applicants.

The two Support Workers are excited to be taking on these new tasks and challenges, Suki adds: “We are making decisions ourselves on what we do and are using our skills and knowledge much more. When I go home in the

evenings I’m constantly thinking about the job and coming up with new ideas, whereas before I just went home at five and forgot about work.”

Regional Operations Manager Deana Whittle says: “Like Nana and Suki I had my own fears about how the transferring teams would work together, but it’s been fantastic and Nana and Suki are a real pleasure to work with. They’ve taken on extra responsibility and their knowledge and understanding has really made a huge difference to the people we support and our launch here in Birmingham.”

As well as enthusiasm and passion, Nana and Suki bring a valuable knowledge of the deaf community and of the challenges they face.

Nana says “It’s important to recognise that not all deaf people are the same. For example, I would describe myself as profoundly deaf whereas I would describe Suki as hard of hearing.”

It is this knowledge, personal understanding and skill base of the new Birmingham staff team that is ensuring an effective transition and quality outcomes for service users across the city.

Suki says: “I wake up everyday looking forward to work. We have really supportive management and have a great rapport with them. I am looking forward to tackling some new challenges and excited about my future with The SLC Group.”



Nana and Suki with staff from Signloop

The SLC Group have been working in partnership with Sign Loop Interpreting Services to drive forward these deaf services in Birmingham. Sign Loop specialises in providing Language Service Professionals for the deaf and hard of hearing by providing Interpreters to deaf people in their work place as part of their Access to Work (Government funded scheme).



Sign Loop’s Managing Director, Lucy Doig, says: “We are proud to be a service partner of The SLC Group and are developing our role in providing specialist help and support to their deaf and hard of hearing staff and service users across the Birmingham region. We are also impressed with The SLC Group’s eagerness to take on specialist advice in an area often over looked.”



## Anmol Athwal

**Anmol is the new Regional Operations Manager for our Mental Health Services in Birmingham.**

Anmol joins us from a Mental Health Charity where she has managed a range of services across Birmingham, including a mental health resource centre, a city centre homeless centre and numerous supported housing schemes and floating support services. Anmol began her health and social work career ten years ago as a Support Worker – developing her career in a range of roles, resulting in her position of area manager for mental health and learning disability floating support services in Birmingham.

### STAFF SPOTLIGHT ON...

## Leanne Mackeral



Here we meet Leanne who is a Locality Manager in Lancashire and also part of The SLC Group's Transition Team.

**Q: How long have you been with The SLC Group and where have you worked before?**

**A:** I started with The SLC Group in February 2008 as a Locality

Manager. Before this I worked for Progress Care and Education as a Support Worker for three years with Autistic children with Challenging Behaviour and moved to Carestaff Solutions in a managerial role for two years co-ordinating agency in Merseyside area.

**Q: What's the best thing about your job?**

**A:** Feeling that I make a difference to peoples' lives. I feel privileged to be able to support individuals to fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

**Q: You've recently been involved in the Birmingham Transitions Team. Can you tell us a bit about your work in this area?**

**A:** Prior to and following the launch of our new services in Birmingham, I was involved in completing the initial assessments for the new individuals that we were starting to support. I also played a part in group meetings with families and one to one meetings with families to ensure a smooth transition and correct level of support. I have also been working in Liverpool, supporting the management team by conducting training for induction paperwork. I am looking forward to going back to Birmingham in January to support the team to design pictorial paperwork for the sensory impaired staff and individuals.



## A NEW LOOK FOR THE



**In December we launched our new logos and branding across The SLC Group.**

The branding has been designed to capture the changes that have taken place over the past 12 months and to ensure that the different parts of our organisation are represented on a local level whilst retaining the SLC brand identity.

SLC Paragon, SLC Raglin and Signposts will each have their own logo with the central SLC name consistent in all the designs. This will mean our stakeholders can recognise at a glance the companies and services provided by The SLC Group.

Each region of SLC Paragon (North and Midlands) will also have a separate logo to identify these local services to stakeholders in the areas they operate.

## Meet Ruth

**Service Manager Ruth Neeson manages Signposts' community based services across Liverpool. Here she tells us about her experiences and how she is utilising her skills and knowledge to develop her work at The SLC Group.**



"I started working in social care when I was 19 as a Care Worker for Older People's services. Since then I have worked in a variety of roles in the social care sector from Senior Support Worker to Deputy Manager.

Before joining Signposts in February 2010, I was a Deputy Service Manager as well as a PCP coach co-ordinating and delivering Person Centred Planning Training in partnership with Helen Sanderson Associates.

My favourite thing about my job is spending time with the people we support. My background in coaching means I really enjoy developing staff to provide great person centred support. Since Signposts joined The SLC Group I have been visiting teams across SLC Raglin working with individuals to develop their Person Centred Plans and Essential Lifestyle Plans based on my background knowledge and PCP training.

I have really enjoyed this work so far and I am looking forward to the new challenges and experiences that working with The SLC Group will bring."

**We're sure you'll all join us in welcoming Ruth to the Team.**

# Life's Sweet at Sugar Lane



Support Workers Sharon Doran, Lauren Keating and supported individual Lisa Woods

**One of our newly established SLC Raglin services, Sugar Lane, is located in Knowsley and is home to Heather and Lisa. We went to meet with the team at Sugar Lane to learn more about the service and how Heather and Lisa are settling into their new home.**

When we arrive Heather makes us feel immediately welcome as she proudly shows us her room, and

points out pictures of her family and things that are special to her. Heather moved into her new home from a residential setting in September and has since made a successful step to living in her own tenancy.

Locality Manager Helen Wright explains: "Heather was anxious at first but has since settled in and has had some very positive experiences and achievements. She now goes to the shops every other day, when previously she hadn't left her residential school site for years, is using the stairs and can use a kettle to make a cup of coffee, something she had never done before. We're really pleased with her progress and achievements."

During her transition period, the SLC staff team travelled to Heather's residential school in order to get to know her better. Helen explained: "The team have

also undergone training which is specific to Heather's needs, Heather has difficulties with verbal communication so the staff have also been learning Makaton so they can increase her choice and involvement." After a guided tour of the house, courtesy of Heather, we had the opportunity to chat to housemate Lisa, who has learning disabilities and was previously living in another service. "When setting up the service Lisa was able to get involved in recruiting her staff team," explains Helen. "She attended an assessment centre at SLC's Merseyside office for two lots of interview sessions." Lisa admits to being a little shy during the interviews, which is rather at odds with the bubbly and chatty character that she seems. "I didn't know what to say" she giggles. This being the case she certainly seems to have chosen well as she laughs and jokes with her staff team.

**Congratulations Heather and Lisa!**

# There is no stopping Stuart!



From abseiling down a tower block to performing in national gymnastics displays, no challenge is too great for SLC Raglin's Stuart Thompson.

An all round sports lover, Stuart's passion has taken him all over the world and earned him countless medals... and enabled him to have a great time and make friends along the way.

We went to meet with Stuart and his parents, Doris and Trevor, to discuss his sporting achievements and how his staff team have helped him to achieve his ambitions.

Stuart's Dad explains to us that Stuart has a lot of energy, so his gymnastics and other sporting interests are perfect.

He says: "When he comes home we can't keep up with him! He goes horse riding, works at an agricultural centre called Midstream during the week, attends gymnastics twice a week and likes going to the driving range to practice his golf skills."

Stuart tells us how much he loves attending gymnastics at the Spartac Gymnastics Club at Edge Hill College in Ormskirk. His recent achievements include performing at the Edge Hill University 125 Years Celebration Night, which was featured in the Ormskirk Advertiser, and

abseiling down Ormskirk Hospital Tower for the NHS Charitable Fund for Southport and Ormskirk.

Stuart's mum, Doris says "Gymnastics started as a way of Stuart getting some more exercise and being healthy, but he began to really enjoy it. That was in 2002 and now he goes twice a week. He travels the country taking part in displays as part of his team and every year he goes to London and Scotland to take part in gymnastics displays with mainstream clubs from across the country."

Stuart has also gone global with his talents – travelling to Portugal, Austria and Switzerland to take part in international displays with his local team, as part of the Great Britain Team.

"We're delighted that Stuart has found something he loves and are very proud of his achievements" adds Doris.