

## People we support get involved in recruitment

Here at Hft, we believe it's vital for people we support to play an active role in recruiting their support workers. Read on to find out how Anne, Aiden and Victoria are helping to shape their own support teams.

### Anne and Aiden, Hft Cornwall

At the Resource Centre in Wadebridge, Hft Cornwall, Anne and Aiden have been instrumental in their service's recent recruitment drive. Looking through CVs, writing questions for candidates and even participating in interviews, they've been involved in every step of what has been, thanks to the nationwide recruitment crisis, a tricky time for hiring managers. Aiden says:

**“ Being involved in recruitment makes me feel very helpful.**

Anne adds:

**“ I like doing the interviews to be able to ask questions and listen to their answers. I like being part of the interview process, and I like meeting new people.**

So far, Anne and Aiden have been actively involved in the recruitment of over 20 new colleagues, and have even contributed their expertise to other Hft services around Cornwall.



### Victoria, Hft Lancashire

Victoria has been involved in the recruitment of staff across Hft Lancashire for a long time – from distributing leaflets in the community to helping with interviews.

**“ It's very important for me to be involved in recruiting support staff, because I would like the right staff to be supporting me. I enjoy doing the interviews and asking questions. I feel like this is a job for me and I really enjoy it,** she says.

When asked what makes someone a good support worker, Victoria said:

**“ Someone with patience, a good listener – and someone who likes shopping!**



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## News *from* around Hft...

### Covid-19 Update

The government has laid out its plans for 'Living with Covid', bringing an end to public restrictions. However, there will be further, specific guidance for adult social care, particularly with regard to self-isolation, visiting, testing and PPE requirements. By 1 April the government will publish updated IPC guidance to replace current guidance for care homes, home care and other adult social care services. We will update you when this guidance is published, outlining what the changes mean for us. Until then please continue to follow all current guidelines and practices to keep the people we support safe. For visitors to our care homes, this means that, though there is no limit on the number of visitors (or the length of time they stay), families and friends should liaise with us in advance and follow the infection control measures required, e.g. a negative LFD test on the day of the visit, using PPE where appropriate, etc. The essential caregiver role is encouraged, though they should follow the same testing regime expected of our colleagues.

For more information, see the government website or visit [www.hft.org.uk/families](http://www.hft.org.uk/families)



### Hft's 1.4 challenge returns

In 2021, Hft launched the 1.4 challenge as a way of showing some love to the people we support in the face of the pandemic. The 1.4 challenge is a fundraising campaign that encourages colleagues, people we support, families, friends – anyone, really – to set themselves a challenge around the theme of either 1.4 or 14.

This year, the people we support have set themselves some brilliant challenges – such as Tim, Jenny, Terry, Danny, and William from Hft Devon (pictured), who challenged themselves to play various ball games non-stop for 14 minutes!

Challenges were still being accepted up to the end of March. Look out for news of how much we raised in 2022!



### Luv2meetU gets connected with Vodafone!



We were recently thrilled to learn that Vodafone will be donating 170 mobile phone SIM cards, each including a six-month supply of 20GB of data plus unlimited calls and texts, for our new Luv2meetU volunteers to use over the next couple of years.

Vodafone was impressed by the Luv2meetU team's successful use of technology to reach more people with learning disabilities than ever throughout the pandemic. Their donation will help our new army of volunteers expand the programme's reach even further, allowing us to help more vulnerable people stay connected than ever before.

For more information about Luv2meetU, please [visit our website](#).



### Introducing Luv2meetU Online

This year, the team behind Luv2meetU will be launching a brand-new service called Luv2meetU Online.

This new service will allow people with learning disabilities and autism to access an exciting range of national virtual events, meet new people and make new friends across the UK.

Look out for further announcements later this year!

## Be a BathHalf hero



The Bath Half Marathon takes place on Sunday 29 May and takes you right through the heart of this beautiful World Heritage city, past some of the most iconic buildings and across the famous Putney Bridge.

This race is considered the best half marathon in the south-west, and we have a place on the starting line with your name on it!

[Sign up today!](#)

# Let's *connect!*

Human beings are social creatures: establishing connections and communicating with others is incredibly important for us. While most of us take our ability to do this for granted, it can be much more difficult for adults with learning disabilities and autism; from making friends to communicating their most basic needs, the people we support here at Hft often face tremendous barriers to these essential parts of life – barriers that our dedicated support colleagues work hard every day to help them break down.

In this edition of our newsletter, we wanted to showcase three brilliant examples of communication and connection among the people we support. Here are Molly, Stuart and Charlie's stories.

## A special connection on Valentine's Day

Charlie, a person we support in Hft Kent South, surprised support workers on Valentine's Day by asking them to help him purchase a card and a bunch of flowers. Curious colleagues couldn't help but wonder who the lucky recipient would be – and their questions were answered when Charlie asked for support to address the card to Molly, another person we support at Seaview.

The team supported Charlie to shave and put on his smartest clothes, and before long he was on Molly's doorstep holding out his gifts. Molly was clearly touched, and welcomed Charlie into her home. She even gave him a quick kiss as a thank you!

Charlie and Molly spent some time chatting, after which Molly showed Charlie around her flat. They then put on some music and danced together round the lounge. When it was time for Charlie to go home, he asked Molly for another date – which she happily agreed to!



## Molly's training course

Colleagues at Hft Kent South were struggling to support Molly, whose complex needs, emotional distress and challenging behaviour had been escalating for some time. Conversations with Molly about her needs were becoming difficult, and it was clear that a total change in communication style was needed.

Led by Marta, a member of Hft's Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team, Molly and her support workers engaged in a roleplay activity, in which Molly played a team member and a team member played Molly – the aim being to show Molly exactly what she was doing and how it was affecting the team. Communicating in this way helped Molly to understand that things needed to change, and the group decided that, because Molly knew her own needs better than anyone else, she should get involved in training her own support workers.

Molly found it easier to describe her feelings in writing, so she and Marta used notes she had written to create some PowerPoint slides that described Molly's needs and how colleagues could best support her, all in Molly's own words. Marta then supported Molly to deliver the training in person to potential new support workers.



Molly now has a new team that she has personally selected, all of whom have attended her training session. Everyone at Hft Kent South is over the moon to see Molly so empowered, communicating her needs effectively and taking control over who supports her and how.

## Giving Stuart a voice

Stuart is a non-verbal person we support within Hft Leeds who, several months ago, was experiencing a persistent and tricky problem: he was unable to communicate what he



wanted to do and when. Support workers noticed that, often, he'd end up just watching TV, or doing something else that he didn't appear to enjoy.

Amelia, one of Stuart's supported living workers, realised that a new way of communicating was required to give Stuart the voice he needed and deserved. Working with Hft's Personalised Technology team, she turned to **Hear Me Now**, an app that helps people with learning disabilities capture what matters to them, add content in their preferred format (text, images, audio or video), and share information with others.

Amelia input Stuart's morning and evening routines into Hear Me Now, so that he knew when to brush his teeth, for example, just by looking at the app. As Stuart loves food, she also added photos of different meals at his favourite pubs, to make choosing what he wanted to eat much easier than it had been. Finally, she added a broad range of activities, which enables Stuart to choose what he wants to do and when.

By finding an alternative method of communicating with Stuart, Amelia and Hft colleagues have helped him find his voice and live the best life possible.

## News *from* around Hft...

### Family and Friends Questionnaire: We value your feedback



Thank you to all of our families and friends who provided valuable feedback in our annual questionnaire. Your views help us to continuously improve our services.

Your feedback has been collated and localised, and Registered Area Managers will report back to you on how and when changes will be made.

We're pleased to say that most of our day services have reopened their doors and are now welcoming back the people we support. We're restarting more social activities and are going out into the local communities again. We're also working to increase our offering of healthier meal options, and to create opportunities for enhancing the life skills of the people we support.

In addition, disrupted staffing levels that were experienced during the pandemic are stabilising again, with recruitment and retention remaining a top priority for Hft.

### Take action! An update on our Lockdown on Loneliness campaign



In the last edition of our newsletter, we told you about our **Lockdown on Loneliness campaign**, which launched on 3 December 2021 and highlighted experiences of loneliness among people with learning disabilities.

Since then, we have made a series of recommendations to the UK government in order to tackle this issue – and as this newsletter goes to print, we will be preparing to take the campaign directly to parliament, where a person we support will be sharing their experiences of loneliness and explaining why the campaign is so important to them.

We wanted to say a big thank you to everyone who has already contacted their MP about the campaign. For those who haven't, it's not too late to act! A report is available to download on **our website**, where you will also find a template letter to send to your MP. We also have easy-read resources that your relative can use if they'd like to get involved!

To find out more about our Lockdown on Loneliness campaign, please **visit our website**.

## Happy anniversary, Mary!

Mary Jennens (pictured) is celebrating a whopping 35 years supporting people with learning disabilities to live the best life possible.



Mary started working for Hft in November 1986 – and three and a half decades later, she continues in her role as Support Worker at supported living service Seaview Manor, Hft Kent South. She describes feeling a huge sense of achievement at having reached such a career milestone – and being one of the longest-serving support workers in the whole of Hft!

**“ It's incredible to think that I'm still supporting some of the same people I met all those years ago on my very first day of work, she says.**

Mary first took on her role at Hft on a part-time basis, to supplement the income she earned working in a café. However, as she began to settle into her new job she realised that this was what she wanted to do full time. Mary enjoys how varied her role is, and how she forms bonds not just with the people she supports, but with their families also.

Despite the challenges – most notably, the recent Covid-19 pandemic – Mary says she feels fortunate that she can do a job she gets so much fulfilment from. Mary says:

**“ I think Hft is special, my heart is here. I think it works because of the great staff, and of course the people we support. I believe I've made a difference in the lives of the people I support, and they have definitely made a difference in my life.**

Three cheers for Mary – what an inspiration!

## RideLondon is back!



The world's greatest festival of cycling returns on **Sunday 29 May** with a new format, exciting new routes and a new partnership with Essex County Council.

Take on 100 miles on traffic-free roads through the heart of London and neighbouring Essex. Saddle up with #TeamHft and make every mile count!

**Sign up today!**



Please let us know what you think!

Send your thoughts to **families@hft.org.uk**

## Graham's award

Graham, whose acting achievements have been reported in previous newsletters, won the ScorpisFest Award for best actor in an online ceremony in February following his sensitive portrayal of Tom in the short film *The Secret Life of Tom Lightfoot*.

The ScorpisFest Awards is an annual event organised by Scorpis Magazine, an international online independent film and music

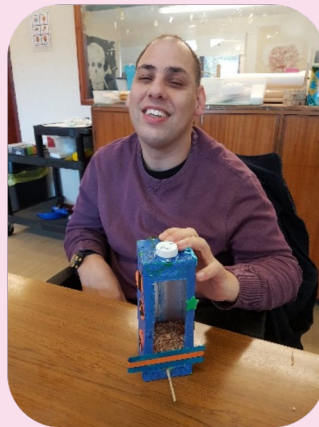
magazine. Graham's nomination, along with excerpts from the film, can be seen online by searching 'Scorpis 2022 Awards Ceremony' in YouTube and skipping the video ahead to 16.33 minutes.

*The Secret Life of Tom Lightfoot* is one of a trilogy produced by members of Arty Party, a Telford-based theatre company for adults with learning disabilities. Although the films have now been shown at film festivals across the world, local audiences had an opportunity to see all three for the first time on 16 February 2022 at a theatre in Telford.



## Nathan gets creative

Nathan Basudev, who lives locally with his father, attended our day service for many years until its temporary closure during the pandemic. Now that the day service is re-opening, Nathan has returned and quickly decided that he would like to pursue his interest in wildlife by producing bird feeders. Although in the past he used to make wooden bird feeders in our woodwork shop, in the spirit of environmental friendliness he decided to use recycled milk cartons and lollipop sticks to create a new design. These are now hanging outside our craft workshop, attracting a frenzy of feeding birds!



## Abigail's exotic adventure

My name is Abigail Martin and I live in Wrekin Cottage. I have a passion for animals, so I asked my keyworker, Chloe Eacock, for assistance with looking into working with animals. We contacted multiple places regarding voluntary work without success. Chloe then assisted me to call the Exotic Zoo, which had opened in Telford, and to fill in an application form. They were happy to take me on as a volunteer.

I now enjoy going in every Thursday. I love feeding the animals and making sure they have clean houses to live in. I enjoy interacting with other people, and I have been there without support. This is a massive confidence boost for me, and I now feel that I have found my **DREAM JOB!**

Hft bought me my own fleece, and I received a t-shirt from the Exotic Zoo to make me feel part of the team there.

### Photos

**Top:** Nathan and one of his bird feeders

**Bottom:** Abigail volunteering at the Exotic Zoo