

“let’s talk care”

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daring caring

Abassador challenges conventional ideas about care. Find out more on the centre pages...

a great adventure in care

Adventure! That's the name of the game at a Newcastle day care centre.

If you thought attendance at a day care centre was about having a quiet, if constructive, time – you hadn't reckoned on what goes on at The Grange Day Care Centre, Throckley.

And nor had you reckoned on the enthusiasm of people like Senior Care Officer Richard Shirbon, one of the region's newest Care Ambassadors.

Not only do clients of the Grange get involved in a range of activities from art to oral history, courtesy of the associated Grange Arts project, but they also embark on much bigger adventures.

Abseiling, kayaking, helicopter trips and rolling down zip wires are just some of the challenges that people get to grips with at The Grange, which has contracts Newcastle and Northumberland councils and with individuals holding personalised budgets. "The grant

funding officers say they've never seen anything quite like it," says Richard. "People of 95 doing yoga or wheelchair-users abseiling."

But it is all for sound reasons. "There are people coming to the centre who have mixed abilities and capabilities and we provide opportunities in a stimulating creative environment for people to challenge themselves and to learn new skills and raise their confidence," says Richard, 30.

"The people who come to the centre are statistically in quite a deprived area in west Newcastle and for various reasons they might not have had the opportunity to try their hand at these different skills."

Other activities include yoga, Tai Chi, ceramics and an oral history project with Tyne & Wear Museums, in which clients help to create social history "story bags" that can then be used as teaching aids in local schools.

Richard Shirbon with one of the Grange Day Centre clients on an activity day on the River Tyne at Newburn



“We have a got a musician who comes and works in the centre and we are linking in with a project that looking at how music can stimulate different areas of the brain in dementia sufferers.”

Richard believes the remarkable range of activities at The Grange make a real difference to the lives of clients – but getting involved in the care industry has also made a big difference to his own life.

He started his working life fitting kitchens but always felt happier helping people. “So, 12 years ago, I took an amazing pay cut to go into working for a nursing home and got a part-time job in a hospital in Yorkshire.”

Then he moved into nursing in the NHS in the North East, constantly seeking to improve himself by taking courses in his own time. He joined The Grange three years ago, gaining his manager’s qualification last year.

Becoming a Care Ambassador is just a natural extension of Richard’s enthusiasm for his work. “As a care ambassador, I’m normally part of a team of two or three and we’ll go to careers events, Jobcentres and so on and talk to people to see whether they have considered going into the care services.”

Indeed, there can be fewer better advertisements for a career in care than Richard.

For more information on becoming a Care Ambassador contact Skills for Care on 01642 345681 or email northeast@skillsforcare.org.uk.



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Images courtesy of Grange Arts and Calvert Trust Kielder