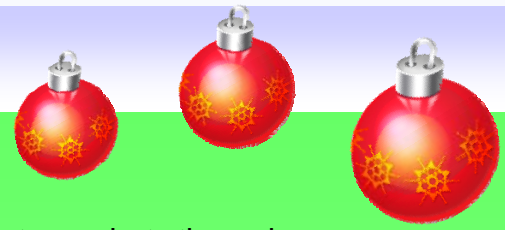


Local Branch News



Christmas Leave

I know it seems early to be thinking of Christmas but through experience we have learnt that it is best to plan carefully for the Festive Season.

Christmas is a time of great emotion. At Home Choice Care we believe that we have an extremely important role to play in making the festive period really special for our Service Users. We believe that our service users should not have strange faces or be put at risk by staff shortages over the festive holidays. For this reason we ask you all at interview to understand that planned annual leave is not granted during the Festive Season.

However, given that the level of service provision may vary over this period, there may be opportunities to review requests for 'exceptional' paid leave over the period. In the interest of fairness, care workers who wish to request exceptional leave will be asked to specify a preference for 1 day over the 5 key Festive Days of Xmas Eve, Xmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day.

We will shortly be sending out requests to our service users to inform us of what their festive plans are. Once this information is gathered and collated we will be in a better position to review any requests. You can help speed this process up by informing us of any information you may have about the plans of your service users.

Please note: any agreements made prior to your commencement with HCC (i.e. in the case of Sheffield and KCHT workers) will be honoured.

Our plans are as follows:

October - A letter will go out to all Service Users and relatives requesting their plans for festive season and identifying which days they will not require service.

November - Collation and documentation of all service user information and confirmation with Social Services of service user's cancellation dates.

Mid November - A letter will go out to all care workers. This letter will

Reiterate the discussions held in this Newsletter. This information will be collated and where possible care workers will be notified of the agreement of paid leave by 5th December.

December - All Christmas week rotas will be completed by **10th December**.

Thank you all for your cooperation and understanding.



BE AWARE AND SAFE GUARD OUR CLIENTS

The subject of abuse of vulnerable people is one which we at Home Choice Care keep in the forefront of our minds. The tabloid press would have us believe that it is happening more and more. Abuse from families, abuse from strangers and abuse from care staff.

There are 3 key things you should remember:-

Not all care staff are as honest as you

Not all families are nice to their relatives

Not all clients can protect themselves

Recently a care worker in Bedfordshire was jailed for stealing from an elderly gentleman. Over a period of time money kept going missing from a cabinet in the gentleman's home. The family were suspicious and after a failed investigation by the care provider the police were involved. Hidden cameras and motion sensors were set up and the thief caught, an experienced care worker with a previously unblemished record. People like this give us all a bad name. If you suspect someone use the whistle blowing policy. This will protect you and allow a proper investigation to be carried out. If your suspicions are unfounded then the person will be cleared of any wrong doing and have a clean record.

If you suspect a family member or other person, you should not try to investigate this yourself. There are clear procedures laid down about how this is done. Your information should be passed to the local care director in confidence. You may feel that nothing is being done but these investigations have to be carried out discretely so don't assume that if nothing appears to happen quickly, that nothing is being done.

In our own company we have had two incidents over the last year of clients being abused by strangers who gained entry to the clients home by pretending to be care workers. The most recent in Oxford in the last few weeks. It is VITAL that you identify yourself to all clients by showing your ID badge even if they do not ask for it. This is to protect you as well as the clients. If you hear from any client or suspect that any person who should not have been in someone's home, then you must report it quickly. The quick actions of our care workers in Oxford almost certainly prevented the same thing happening to another vulnerable person.



Finally, we all have to be aware that accidents happen and if you arrive at a clients home and cannot locate them, you MUST report it immediately. Lives have been saved by your prompt actions in the past and we all want to make sure we continue to protect our clients in every way we can. Thank you for your continued vigilance.

Jane Orr- Campbell