

TerraBlu – taking care... to keep you informed

SPRING '08

in touch



Welcome to the new look TerraBlu client newsletter. I hope you like it. Its purpose is to keep you informed of what the company is doing in order to provide you with the best service possible. There is lots of exciting stuff going on at TerraBlu, which you will hear about in the coming months. This edition will hopefully give you a snapshot of what to look out for. Your input and feedback is encouraged.

Richard Gould, MD



Culturally aware of staffing issues

Some clients may be aware of a recent letter published in The Courier newspaper at the end of April. The writer of the letter flagged up his concerns about Polish support staff, who were caring for his mother. Although he highlighted that they were both 'pleasant' and 'hard working', he took issue with their command of the English language.

Due to the lack of properly qualified English care staff, TerraBlu has recently started recruiting outside of the UK, with overall good results. We have received positive feedback from many clients, some of whom welcome the cultural diversity. One client converses in Italian with her Polish carer! However, at TerraBlu we understand that needs and preferences differ from client to client. If you have any comments, reservations or worries about your support staff, please let us know.

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Listening, improving,

TerraBlu has established a client forum, the first homecare company to do so, to our knowledge, in Kent. The forum met for the first time on 19th March in Tunbridge Wells and discussed a broad range of issues.

The forum is intended to be a place for a frank dialogue on things that are going well, things that need to improve and how services should change over time. Minutes from the meeting were sent out to all clients. Further copies can be requested from Elaine at the office.

The key issues discussed were:

Punctuality. It was acknowledged that our support workers are generally working a round by seeing one client after another, and that traffic and other client needs can sometimes cause call times to be disrupted. It was the general view of the forum that if a call was going to be more than 30 minutes late, the office or On Call Coordinator should inform the client.

Communication. The importance of good communication between support workers, the office and clients was emphasised. It was felt that this is working quite well, but there's always room for improvement.

New Staff. There was a discussion around the difficulty of recruiting local full time staff able to work in the early mornings and the evenings; our busiest times. We updated the forum on our efforts to recruit more support workers from outside the UK to meet this need.

We have had some success with this in Poland, and we will be looking to explore other EU territories in a bid to find highly qualified care staff.

TerraBlu has recently conducted a local benchmarking exercise on employment terms and conditions, compared with other companies in the sector. Happily TerraBlu came out as offering the best pay and conditions. There have been further improvements to staff benefits such



understanding clients

as AA cover and annual bonuses. We are confident that TerraBlu will continue to be one of the best homecare companies to work for in Kent.

Social Events. The forum reiterated how much the opportunity to engage in social events was appreciated and asked if more could be done in this regard to build on the successful Winter Lunch.

TerraBlu hosted a three course lunch on Saturday 2nd February at the Tunbridge Wells Age Concern Centre. Thanks to Elaine, Julia and Emma who organised everything and to Kim, Kasha, Gina, Sheila, Laura, Bozena and Marian who helped on the day.

It was suggested that clients would be prepared to contribute towards the cost of such events. Gina Collins, Care Coordinator is looking into some adult social events in the summer and Sheila Harrison, Care Coordinator will be investigating the feasibility of organising an event for some of the children we look after.

Mayor of Tunbridge Wells, Barbara Cobbold (pictured) was guest of honour at TerraBlu's Winter Lunch at the Age Concern Centre.

“We hope to hold more social events for our clients, as the winter lunch was so well received.

A summer event is being planned.”

**Richard Gould,
MD of TerraBlu.**



If you live in a controlled parking area, please contact your local council office to request visitor parking permits. A parking permit will help your support worker keep to their schedule of care visits.

Recommend your carer for excellence

We started the 'Carer of the Month' scheme last year. Client comments about the TerraBlu service are a vital part of a nomination. Other areas taken into consideration are: flexibility, where a support worker has put themselves out to cover a critical call or to adapt a service to a client's needs; use of initiative by a support worker, in often difficult situations, or to help others in their team; and lastly team working itself, which is about communication, mentoring and supporting within a team.

Every month the Care Coordinators may nominate one member of staff from their areas, and then Julia Mead (Care Manager) and Richard Gould (Managing Director) decide on the winner.

Please feed back your comments regarding your Support Worker to your Care Coordinator. If clients are delighted with the service, we can make sure we reward the carer concerned.

Carers of The Month pictured (top to bottom) are: Kim Murrell (Jan), Anita Trowell (Feb) and Lynsey Gibb (March).



TerraBlu quality questionnaire imminent

The TerraBlu quality questionnaire will soon land on your doormat with a resounding thud. This is probably the most effective way of us getting a comprehensive overview of the standard of our service.

We've asked Age Concern staff to help us in conducting this survey, since they have a lot of expertise in developing services for older people, who represent some 70 per cent of our clients. In addition, it was felt that clients may be more comfortable telling a third party about any elements of our service they are unhappy with. These volunteers will contact a cross section of our clients, and anyone who specifically asks for assistance in completing the questionnaire.

These survey forms are invaluable to us, so thank you for taking part.