

# Egalité



Owner and Registered Manager  
Debbie Clark

Egalité provides domiciliary care and supported living services for younger adults with learning and physical disabilities, autism and mental health needs. Established in 2009, they are the only “outstanding” rated learning disability support service in West Sussex, employing over 100 staff to provide specialised home-based care. Owner and Registered Manager Debbie Clark tells *The Parliamentary Review* how they place a strong emphasis on quality of life and explains how they have been recognised within their industry for their commitment to training and carers development.

I set up Egalité Care Ltd in 2009 after nearly 40 years in the care industry. Almost ten years later, we have developed into a highly successful local company in Worthing, West Sussex. In 2016 we were inspected and rated by CQC as “outstanding”. Two years on, we remain the only “outstanding” service providing support to people with learning disabilities in West Sussex.

I had qualified as a learning disability nurse, worked for the NHS, a local authority and for large charities, but I still felt a strong desire to develop a more personal and responsive way of providing services to those needing everyday support, and offering greater opportunities to live the lives we all dream of and the chance to have life experiences many take for granted.

## Vision

My vision for Egalité was to create a facility that provided the very highest quality, person-centred service, to ensure that others in the organisation shared my values

## FACTS ABOUT EGALITÉ

- » Owner and Registered Manager: Debbie Clark
- » Founded in 2009
- » Based in Worthing, West Sussex
- » No. of employees: 103
- » Services: Domiciliary care and supported living
- » [www.egalitecare.com](http://www.egalitecare.com)



As sisters we work closely together



Making friendships count

“Gaining a rating of ‘outstanding’ from the CQC has been our greatest achievement”

and to build a team of likeminded people. Initially this included many family members, who remain a fundamental part of our team today and provide the drive and vision for the company. On the team we now have three registered nurses and a registered social worker, who coach, mentor, advise, guide and support the care team.

### Story so far

Today the organisation employs over 100 staff and provides support to over 70 clients. We grew rapidly in the first few years as the reputation of the care team caught the interest of not only commissioners but also potential clients, their families and

other organisations. After five years it was clear that we had to manage our growth in order to keep the personal touch and familiarity that are our ethos. Many staff have stayed with us since the early days. We have a high retention rate for the care sector. Of our employees today, almost 50 per cent have been with us for five years or more. Staff turnover is low, too, at approximately nine per cent per annum, the local trend in the care sector being approximately 25 per cent.

### Achievements

Gaining a rating of “outstanding” from the CQC has been our greatest achievement. It is a measure of how much everyone on the team strives to provide the very best in care and support to our clients and their families. To achieve this quality, we have invested in training for our staff team, and provide a clear career pathway. We work closely with the local college to provide apprenticeships to those embarking on a career in health and social care. We are able to provide a wide range of training ourselves thanks to the skills and knowledge of team members. We also work in very close partnership with local government, colleges and national organisations such as Skills



In the photobooth at Summer Party 2017

for Care. We willingly share our knowledge with other providers, and last year we won the local business award for training and development. This year we were finalists in the National Learning Disability Awards, won the Southern Business Awards also for training and development, and won the regional Great British Care Award for frontline leadership. This is great recognition for a smaller company like ours. We have featured in a number of broadcasts, including a BBC documentary and radio interviews highlighting the challenges in our sector, as well as celebrating the creative, compassionate and caring work our team undertakes every day.

### Life is for living

In addition to the day-to-day care we provide, I feel we need to engender a sense of fun and enjoyment of life. We organise a number of festivities throughout the year to socialise, network and have fun. This includes our team, our clients, their families and friends. The highlights are undoubtedly the fancy-dress Halloween Party and the Christmas Party but there are many other excuses to celebrate, including this year's summer party which included circus acts and skill workshops. A local vineyard kindly provides the venue for these events, which are always well attended.

Holidays also form part of the support we provide and, like the parties, these are heavily subsidised as I want to ensure they take place. We travel to France or look around Britain for great holiday destinations.

We cannot ignore the financial challenges we have had to face. The local authority and NHS cuts to funding have had significant impact and continue to present difficulties when it comes to recruitment, as staff are often tempted away by higher wages in other care or non-care settings.



Sharing life with your best friend

For learning disability services in West Sussex the rates have been capped and this impacts heavily on our funding and pay awards. We are constantly looking at creative ways to recruit carers as those who join us usually stay, but we need them to join us in the first instance. We have a strong, supportive culture as the work can be difficult, and we deal with complex health and emotional care needs, often either working alone or in very small teams. This can be emotionally and physically exhausting and as a sector we can frequently feel undervalued. To help show our appreciation we continuously look for extra added value in addition to the rates of pay. Many of our team have received local, and more recently national, care accolades in recognition of their dedication and commitment.

Looking forward, we need robust, affordable social care provision, supporting the most vulnerable in our society. I am determined to ensure that we continue to highlight and reward the amazing dedication and commitment of our care team. They work wonders, helping to transform lives and create secure, happy and positive opportunities for our young adults.

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