

Chairman's Report 2003

These are challenging times with the organisation facing a period of far-reaching change in terms of new regulatory arrangements and legislation. However, I am delighted to confirm that with the Lord's guidance and direction, we are in a position to move forward in confidence and strength.

During the year we said farewell to Mrs Brenda Jones our Care Manager for some 7 years who decided the time was right to stand down and retire. I would place on record our sincere thanks to her for her remarkable contribution to the life and work of the Complex. The Committee of Management was rightly concerned that we would be unable to find anyone of a similar calibre to replace her. However, after a National advertising campaign, we were led to David Bolton who joined us with the right mix of caring and management skills, coupled with the professional ability to guide us through the new Care Standards legislation to ensure the organisation was ready to embrace this new regime. He is ably supported by Lisa Richardson who was subsequently promoted to Deputy Care Manager and who again, has proved to be an outstanding appointment. The very real strength of our organisation is the staff team who serve the Residents with professionalism, commitment and loyalty which is in many ways unrivalled elsewhere. I salute them all for their dedication and genuine desire to care for our residents. David also manages the team in Sheltered Housing where Jenny Brewster continues so successfully as Warden and where Sarah Walsh leads on all aspects of Housing Management. Jenny's risk assessment work has been extremely useful while Sarah's work with the new "Supporting People" arrangements has been particularly effective.

As always there have been changes in the Committee of Management. After 34 years of service, Mrs Ethel Winstanley decided to retire from the Committee in February, feeling that the time was right to stand down. We held a public meeting to officially thank her for her remarkable contribution over all of these years and I would formally record our thanks to her in this report. In her place we were very pleased to be joined by Mr Ken Webb who has already proved to be a valuable addition to the Committee with his mixture of skills and experience. We trust he enjoys many happy years of service to the Company. In terms of Committee Membership there remain concerns that the voluntary service ethic appears to be in decline. We have made several approaches to local Church's to develop and widen the experience of the Committee but we have been disappointed by the lack of response. It may be that in future years we, like many other RSL's, find ourselves in the position of having to advertise for people to join us in serving the community in this way.

The buildings continue to be improved with new windows to all of the Sheltered Housing flats, the call system further improved and extended in to the Care Home along with all of the more minor but equally necessary improvements such as temperature controlled water supplies, window restrictors and radiator covers.

In terms of the future we have embarked on a feasibility study examining how the Care Home can be remodelled to provide extra rooms as a result of the increased demand for places. The Local Authority agreed to increase our number of places in Homesdale from 16 to 18 but this is far from sufficient to meet the demand. The plans were taken to an advanced stage during the year culminating in an open meeting with the residents in Sheltered Housing who would be affected if the plans go ahead.

We praise God for all that has been achieved during the year and pray for his continued guiding hand in all that we do within the Complex during the coming year.