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Goodbye Stephen Elsdon

At the end of March 2024, many of our clients, staff and volunteers gathered to bid Stephen Elsdon a fond farewell over afternoon tea as he stepped down from the role of Compaid's Chief Executive.

Stephen has dedicated 15 years to leading and serving our charity and the broader Kent community. His leadership has enhanced our internal organisation and our external relationships, positioning us strongly for the future

His impact is clear in the charity's growth of service provision, and clients who depend on our accessible transport and one-to-one digital skills support.



We are all grateful to Stephen for his dedication and impactful contributions to our community. We wish him success in his future endeavours.



Steve Sherry, our new CEO



We are delighted to introduce you all to **Steve Sherry CMG OBE**, our new CEO.

Steve has been in the sector for over 12 years providing vital support for people with disabilities and health conditions. He is passionate about communities and reducing social isolation.

Steve joins Compaid after some 13 years in the charity sector in Kent working with veterans and supporting people with disabilities and health conditions. He is passionate about enabling individuals and communities to develop. His earlier career was in the Army with considerable international experience. Now, firmly Kent-based, Steve is looking forward to growing Compaid's social impact through organisational transformation, increasing

partnerships and building our impressive volunteer team.

Here's a fun Q&A we held with Steve:

Q: *What hobby or activity do you enjoy doing most in your free time? Tell us one interesting fact about this activity?*

Steve: I have been coaching a boys' football team for the last 10 years, since they were under 7s. Seeing them grow from toddlers into young men has been an honour and great fun.

The interesting thing is that when selecting boys for the team it was often more based on how well behaved their parents were, rather than the players own skills and talent. You can always train the player but the parents...

Q: *If you could take only 3 things to a deserted island, what would they be?*

Steve: A running machine with display with videos of running routes around the world, a fridge full of beer, and a solar panel for the fridge and running machine!



Q: *What dish could you eat forever and never get tired of?*

Steve: Cod, chips and mushy peas! It has always been my 'go to' meal on return from overseas trips.

Q: *If you were to write a book about your life, what would the title be?*

Steve: Never Bored!

Q: *What is something on your bucket list that you are yet to accomplish?*

Steve: I have always wanted to trek to Everest Base Camp in Nepal and to Machu Picchu in Peru – other events have till now got in the way. Perhaps soon?



Image by Freddie Wilkinson, National Geographic, 2019

A Fond farewell to Jane Sanderson, Compaid's longest client...



Last week, we said goodbye to Jane who has been attending our digital skills centre for 37 years.

Jane said *"Thank you for all the friendships and for all the teaching I have learned regarding how to use a computer. It's been absolutely marvellous considering I did not touch a computer until I was 35."*

Staff, volunteers and fellow clients presented her with an array of gifts and flowers and wished her the warmest farewell.

And our much-loved driver Martyn

We also said goodbye to our driver Martyn Eastwood who has been with Compaid since 2017.

A favourite driver with our Age UK ladies, his cheeky thoughtfulness and jovial ways have been appreciated by many of our clients and passengers.

It's people like Martyn who have made Compaid's accessible transport so enjoyable to use. We are lucky to have so many great drivers in our team.



Compaid Ambassador Zak Skinner prepares for 2024 Paris Paralympic Games



The 2024 Paris Paralympic Games are only 4 months away, and we are delighted to be supporting our charity ambassador, Zak Skinner, as he competes as part of Team GB in the Long Jump.

Zak's consistent training over several months has been impressive, and observing his development is truly motivational!

Here's what his manager Tom Bosworth had to say:

“With the season fast approaching the magnitude of the year preparation for the games have been turned up a notch. With a lot of the final hard graft being done now before we settle in to a competition season.

The training since the indoors season has been hard and testing but also very enjoyable. Zak is in a really good place and excited to show his form in his early competitions. With one final training camp set out in Turkey this month to fine tune his training and get him ready to compete.

We hope to see him competing in end of May/June both in the long jump runways and in the 100m. It's an exciting time and he can't wait to get out there now and get his road to Paris fully underway!”

Please join us in supporting Zak! Follow his progress through our updates on our Facebook, LinkedIn and upcoming Instagram as we count down to the big event. **Good Luck Zak!**

Transport News

Did you know our Out & About service is available in Sevenoaks, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells?

With single journeys costing just £2 for the two mile and £1 for every mile after, you can enjoy comfortable and accessible travel to any destination of your choice within the borough you book your journey from.



Our minibuses can take up to 3 passengers and has one additional space for wheelchair users, so you can go on your journey on your own or with loved ones.

Whether you need a reliable and affordable transport to:

- Attend important medical appointments
- Reach the supermarket to buy groceries and essentials
- Access your local post office, bank or other local amenities
- Have an enjoyable day out with friend and family

Our friendly and accommodating drivers are ready to help you get out and about safely and confidently.

What our passengers have to say:

“Compaid helped me travel to Sevenoaks today. With the eye drops I got after my recent doctor’s appointment, I need help being driven around. Compaid’s transport couldn’t be better.”

- Rashida, 67

“Compaid’s minibus helped me get to the hairdressers today. It enables me to get to places that I wouldn’t be able to when my family and friends aren’t available to help me.”

- Cory, 34

Could we help you get out & about?

Book your journey up to 7 days in advance by calling our Transport team on **01892 832447** between 9am – 4pm, Monday to Friday!

For more information, visit

www.compaid.org.uk/accessible-transport

Volunteer with our Transport Team

Do you have a few hours to spare each week?

We would love to hear from you!

We are looking for people to join our friendly Transport team as volunteer drivers, supporting passengers from their homes as they go on day drips, attend medical appointments, day centres, and grocery stores.

For more details, call Judith Williams at **01892 351055** or email **judithwilliams@compaid.org.uk**



Digital Skills News



job
centre
plus

Outreach Digital Skills Support at the Tonbridge Job Centre

We're excited to share that every Monday, Sara, one of our digital skills trainers, will be available at the Tonbridge Job Centre to assist young job seekers who need help developing their digital skills training support.

With Sara's guidance, these young people will gain the necessary skills to create a professional CV, navigate and complete online job applications and forms, discover courses to enhance their skills, and much more.

If this opportunity interests you, please speak to your work coach for more details.

Morrisons Foundation Music Project Update

In our last issue, we let you know about the exciting music therapy project taking place in our Paddock Wood digital skills centre, generously funded by the Morrisons Foundation.

In March, a group of our clients started sessions with a local music therapist, who brought in a variety of instruments for them to try and learn to play.

After a lot of work our group recorded a song together on the theme of visiting the seaside, with percussion, keyboard





and vocals brought together by everyone involved. They are hoping to produce another song over the next few weeks.

Our Centre Co-Ordinator, Jonathan, said:

“Our clients enjoyed learning to use the different instruments as they recorded their song, and the music therapist was a great help to our staff in guiding them also.

“It was great to help them as they learned to play and record their instrumental or vocal part for the song, and it gave them all a great sense of accomplishment once it was completed.

“I’m looking forward to our trainers working with the music therapist in the coming weeks and continuing to learn from her techniques to inform our sessions.”

Volunteer in our Digital Skills Centre

Do you have a few hours to spare each week?

We would love to hear from you!

We are looking for people to join our friendly team of volunteers in our Paddock Wood Centre supporting clients with their creativity!

For more details, call Judith Williams at **01892 351055**

or email

judithwilliams@compaid.org.uk



Staff & Volunteering News

A Warm Welcome

Always on the look out for new volunteers we recently ran a campaign through the local Parish Magazines and are pleased to say that we had some responses. Join us in welcoming **Matt Ralph**, who will be volunteering in our training centre on Wednesday mornings.

Here are some words from Matt:



'I'm looking forward to being part of the team here. I have worked for over 30 years in the ever-evolving world of technology, my professional journey has been a mixture of software engineering, enterprise architecture, and solution design.

Beyond my coding experience, I have a passion for electronics and robotics. Recently, I've been helping another charity in Kent, working with young adults with cerebral palsy. Together, we embark on a fascinating exploration of technology, electronics, and robotics, breaking barriers and fostering empowerment.

In joining Compaid, I am excited to blend my technical expertise with a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of disabled individuals, helping to build a future where technology becomes a bridge to new possibilities and inclusivity.'



We are pleased to introduce Scott & Richard to our Transport team.

Scott Woods-Thomas says:

I previously worked as a bus driver for Arriva.

After a short break from driving I decided I'd like to get back on the road again, so when I saw the advert for a Driver at Compaid I decided to apply and was very pleased to be offered the job.

I've been working at Compaid since the end of February and have thoroughly enjoyed it - so far!

In my spare time, I enjoy socialising with my friends, spending time with my girlfriend and wrestling, watching mainly but have taken part in the past. I also have a cat called Zola which my girlfriend spoils rotten.



Another new face who has joined our driving team is **Richard Duffell**. He has been based in Paddock Wood since joining us in March but has now moved to Sevenoaks to deliver our Age UK service.

We extend a warm welcome to our new volunteers and staff.

We all look forward to working with you.

And a Fond Farewell...

Compaid bids a warm farewell to drivers **Shaun Godfrey, Nikki Winfield** and **Alison Phillips**.



Shaun has been a key part of Compaid's Kent Karrier service and SEN transport service in North-West Kent for over 4 years. Whilst Nikki and Alison have been based in Sittingbourne.

Nikki first came on board at Compaid in 2014, and both clients and colleagues may recall her earlier days at the Paddock Wood office before she relocated to Sittingbourne in the fall of 2020



Alison joined us as Passenger Assistant on our Special Education Needs home to school transport in April 2015.

Each of them will be dearly missed by the passengers and children they regularly accompanied on journeys, as well as by the entire Compaid Team.

We extend our gratitude for their commitment and professionalism and wish them immense success in their future endeavours!

Fundraising News

We would like to thank the following trusts and foundations whose ongoing support enables us to extend our services to those who need it most:

- A G Manly Charitable Trust
- Percy Bilton Foundation
- Motability Community Transport
- Polebrook Fund via Kent Community Foundation
- Joan Ainslie Charitable Trust
- Cobtree Charitable Trust

Additionally, we wish to express our appreciation for the financial assistance provided by Sevenoaks District Council. Their funding has enabled us to provide additional drop-in sessions for vulnerable Sevenoaks residents, helping them to gain crucial digital skills.

Fundraising Events



Thank you to Tunbridge Wells Harriers for hosting another successful Half Marathon in February.

Our Compaid volunteers, Miles Harvey, Lee Berry, Amanda Sheer, Nicholas Goldsmith & Diane Bradley, and supporting volunteers Grazia Manzotti, Andy Wythes & Tina Shea, gave up their Sunday morning to support this well organised event.

In return for our volunteer's support the race committee make a generous donation to Compaid as thanks for the volunteer marshals we provided during the race.



Paddock Wood Half Marathon



Every year, Compaid is able to offer parking facilities for the participants of the Paddock Wood Half

Marathon, thanks to the generosity of our volunteers. We are grateful to Baxalls and Nigel Exall for allowing us to use their parking lots, providing competitors with convenient parking close to the race start. In exchange, we encourage a donation to Compaid to support our ongoing efforts.

This year we raised over £700 from generous athletes.

Flowers from Delilah and Herb

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Amy Pay from Delilah and Herb Luxury Florist Designs for brightening the day for these wonderful ladies. Whenever Amy has extra flowers, she kindly donates them to Compaid, transforming an ordinary afternoon into a delightful and memorable occasion for all involved.



If you would like to gift some beautiful luxury flowers, check out their website: www.delilahandherb.co.uk/

How you can support Compaid

In common with many other Charities, we are dependent on raising funds from a variety of sources to maintain and expand our services. We rely heavily on the generosity of individuals, trusts, and companies for financial support. Donations not only assist in funding existing programs but also in expanding services to reach more individuals in need.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, to maintain our current support to the vulnerable people we support we will need to raise **£320,000** this year, and even more to be able to fund our planned future developments. We are extremely grateful to all the Trusts, Foundations, local businesses, organisations, and individuals who currently support Compaid.

In this competitive funding market, we are always keen to hear from businesses or individuals who may feel they could sponsor or support us in some way, and every contribution, big or small, helps us greatly.

£50 could help fund a specialist trainer for half a day, supporting people with complex needs to use technology effectively.

£100 could provide a full day of computer training for a small group of young people, improving their job prospects and ability to stay connected.

£500 could support the costs of running Compaid's transport service for a week, aiding vulnerable passengers to attend essential medical appointments, buying groceries or social activities.

£5,000 could significantly contribute towards an annual license for specialised communication software, helping those with severe

disabilities to communicate and interact with their community and networks.

If you, or anyone you know, would like further information about how to support Compaid please contact **Diane Bradley**, Fundraising Manager by email at **dianebradley@compaid.org.uk** or call **01892 351054** for an informal chat.

Would you like to know more about Compaid, and the services we provide?

Scan the QR code below to visit our website or find us on social media to find out more.



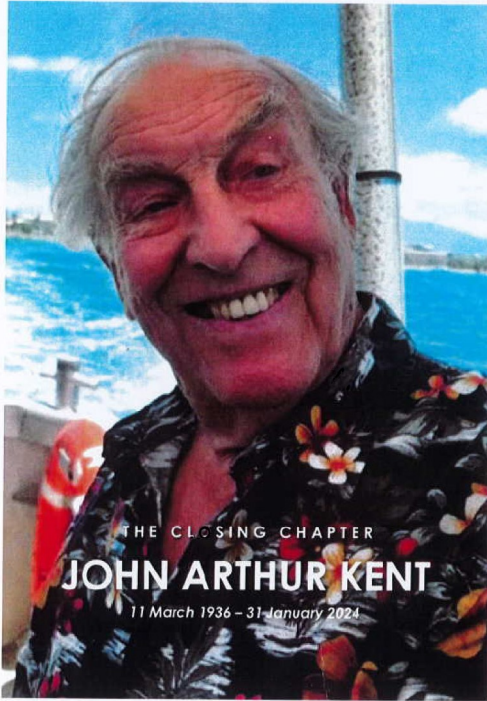
How to get started to become an easyfundraiser for Compaid

3 simple steps are all it takes to support Compaid & help us have the chance to receive a £500 donation:

1. Click here to add easyfundraising.org.uk to your web browser:
www.easyfundraising.org.uk/donation-reminder/
2. Select Compaid as your chosen charity
3. Click 'Give a free donation' when notified by easyfundraising while shopping online



Thank you for your support!



[A Final Note: In Memory of John Kent](#)

Last month, we said goodbye to our beloved supporter John Kent, whose steadfast commitment to Compaid over the years has been truly commendable. John's daughter Jeannette attended our centre back in the 90s following a stroke.

John and his wife Pat, who sadly passed in 2021, made it their mission to ensure other disabled people could benefit from our services as did his daughter.

John's generosity, kindness, and commitment to our cause touched countless lives and will be deeply missed. John's son Allan, who lives with his family in New Zealand, was keen that his father's legacy of compassion will forever inspire us to continue our mission.

Compaid

Removing barriers *Improving lives*

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