



WHERE CARING COMES FIRST

Whether it's just simple help or specialist nursing you require, April Complete Care Solutions based in Pencoed, Bridgend have an excellent reputation. Here, Vale Life speaks to Wendy Duckworth, Registered Manager, about the company's philosophy and its comprehensive range of quality services.

Hi Wendy, what's your role at April Complete Care Solutions?

I'm the Registered Manager for the company which was established in 1996. I started here as Human Resources Manager and through the strong ethos of learning and development at April, I have achieved my Level 4 RMA and received promotion to Registered Manager.

This includes assessment and monitoring of nursing and care needs, co-ordination with other agencies and family members in order to achieve, develop and maintain the best possible nursing and care for the individual.

What's the company's philosophy?

We provide excellent nursing and care services to a broad range of people and organisations across south Wales. April provides an enabling service which recognises the differing needs of all clients in a manner which enhances their dignity and independence.

Many of our clients have complex and diverse needs, some requiring 24 hour care, varying shift patterns, differing skills and different levels of personal care services. April has therefore established a fully extensive employee database, which undergoes continual rigorous assessment, training and scrutiny of our working practices.

In order to be proactive, we actively encourage positive feedback from both clients and employees. Our database is managed 24 hours, seven days a week.

Who formed the company?

Mrs Debra Hooper formed Apex Nursing Services in 1996 and worked consistently to build a reputation for quality care and reliability. In October 2002, Apex Nursing Services and Apex for Lifelong Learning joined to become April Complete Care Solutions.

April Complete Care Solutions staff pictured left. Delyth Wilson, Deputy HR Manager and Booking Co-ordinator, Wendy Duckworth, Registered Manager, Mathew Hughes, Accounts Manager, Cerys Davies, Admin Asst



What services does April provide?

April Complete Care Solutions is able to provide any type of care that the client requires from simple help to specialist nursing. This may include practical help and support for people at home with essential daily tasks they are unable to manage safely for themselves. This may be providing assistance to get up or go to bed, to get washed or to get dressed, or help with shopping, laundry, etc.

Our aim is to help people live as independently as possible and to encourage people to regain skills they may have lost because of illness or disability. Many of our clients engage us for a short term to allow family members a break from providing care for a relative when a nursing or care home stay is not an option.

We also provide nursing care to those clients with more specialist needs such as palliative care and severe physical disability. We provide care from three hours a day to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We dedicate ourselves to providing an operating framework that is adaptable to meet the needs of a fast changing business environment, the needs of our staff and to ensure that our service provides value for money. We provide our service in client's own homes, at times convenient to them, and in ways that they find most agreeable.

How does it work?

We provide for each client a package of care that contributes to his or her overall personal and healthcare needs and preferences. We ensure that a potential client's needs and preferences are thoroughly assessed by one of our trained and experienced staff and that these needs are re-assessed regularly and that the care and support provided is flexible enough to respond to changing needs or requirements.

April Complete Care Solutions provides nursing and care to a range of user groups including NHS hospitals, private hospitals, nursing and residential homes, elderly mentally infirm nursing, organisational practice and occupational health nursing, one to one private and social services nursing. Care is provided for older people, those with memory impairment, people with learning and/or physical disabilities, younger disabled, people who have head or spinal injuries, those who have a life threatening illness, people who have mental health problems, children and families.

"We provide our service in client's own homes, at times convenient to them, and in ways that they find most agreeable and adaptable and to ensure that our service provides value for money."

We believe that the expertise within the management framework ensures that a complete package of service is available for clients and that staff employed by the agency are given the opportunity to develop through sound career advice and structured learning.

The management and staff believe that by providing opportunities, facilities and support for training, employees are in possession of the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform their job to the highest standard. Where specific skills and experience are required both nurses and care workers will be placed specifically to meet those needs.

All of our staff are carefully selected professionals who are trained, fully referenced and undergo security screening as part of a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) Enhanced Disclosure application.

What is the most satisfying thing about your job?

Knowing we are able to provide a consistent, reliable and effective service. One of the most rewarding aspects of my position is to meet with clients from all walks of life. It is lovely talking to clients and helping them to lead a normal life – everyday is different.

It helps me to understand the problems they face and gives me a better understanding of how we, as a company, can tailor our services to provide the best possible care. The effort and dedication of all our staff to deliver the service in all its aspects is particularly satisfying and I receive great support from all of my colleagues. I hope that I continue to play a part in ensuring our service continues to provide security and peace of mind for the vulnerable people in our care.

What are the advantages for a family choosing to have their relative looked after at home?

There are many things to consider when contemplating the care of a loved one. The choice of whether to opt for home care or to place them in a care home really comes down to choosing a greater level of independence and flexibility or a more fixed routine. Whilst there are many positives to care homes, they cannot offer bespoke one-to-one care in your own home on your own terms. Due to the nature of caring for a large group of individuals, they need to have fairly strict rules that keep the home running efficiently. They can't always offer the flexibility of simple things like eating what you want, going to bed when you want or watching what you like on television.

These simple things are important when considering the mental well-being of your relative - beloved pets get to stay home too! The benefits of allowing the elderly to retain their individuality and independence in their later years cannot be underestimated. This is particularly true for dementia conditions where maintaining continuity and familiarity of routine is especially important. With the flexibility of home care, the family can visit on their own schedule and can have more hands on involvement if they choose to.

What makes April Complete Care Solutions unique?

When looking to ensure that your loved ones are going to be supported in a way that would maintain their independence and safety for as long as possible, you need to be confident that help is always at hand. The management team at April Complete Care Solutions have personally experienced the difficulty of accessing appropriate services for their dependants, and this is precisely why April Complete Care Solutions was launched in 1996. We simply could not find anyone else who was going to care in the way that we wanted them to! We also value our staff with the highest regard.

This promotes motivation and enthusiasm within the workforce. Each quarter, we reward a member of staff with our 'Employee of the Quarter' award and we hold an annual awards ceremony for our staff and reward staff when we receive written or verbal compliments from their clients. We operate an 'open door' policy to all of our staff whereby they can call in at any time for advice and support.

What keeps you at April Complete Care Solutions?

I have been working in the care sector for 18 years and love working in this industry. April is totally different from any other organisation I've worked for. Staff are encouraged with development opportunities and personal fulfillment and we support them fully in achieving their ambitions. Some care staff have gone on to do their Nurse training and whereas they were once employed by us as a carer, they are now employed by us as a Qualified Nurse.



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LLANTWIT MAJOR
How April Care Solutions helped Huw

Vale Life had the opportunity to see first hand the quality of services April Complete Care Solutions has to offer when we met two of their staff, Sandra Lewis and Lily Button with Ron Jenkins and his son Huw at their home in Llantwit Major. We asked Ron what life was like looking after Huw and how the team from April Complete Care Solutions made all of their lives that much easier.

How old is Huw and what are his difficulties?

Huw is 27 and he is severely disabled.

How did you learn that Huw was disabled?

My wife Sue was pregnant with twins but unfortunately lost one at 24 weeks. We took Huw home not knowing that there were any problems. When Huw was one, we were told that Huw had problems but they couldn't tell us what the prognosis would be. Getting support was difficult. We both had busy jobs, I was a production foreman with Ely Paper Mill and Sue was a district nurse.

Did Huw go to school?

Huw went to Maes y Coed School in Barry until that closed when he was about 13. It was then suggested that he go to Maes y Dyfan in Penarth. This would have meant a 45 minute journey each way to the school. In those days the buses weren't that reliable and we were concerned that the length of time on a bus, making all of the stops needed would be more than Huw could cope with and we would be worrying if he got there at all! We had fantastic support from our local Councillor, Barry Doughty and with his help managed to get Huw into a facility locally until he was 19. Then his health deteriorated and we realised that he would need 24 hour care.

Has life got more difficult as Huw has got older?

When Huw was younger and in better health, he travelled with us all over Europe in our motor home. Huw has travelled to America with us four times. What is perhaps difficult for people to understand is that although we have a disabled son, our family is not disabled. We want to give our child the experiences that other children enjoy, as much as is possible. Unfortunately Huw hasn't been well enough for a number of years now so holidays with him have been curtailed.

When did you realise that you needed extra help?

When Huw's health deteriorated, his needs were more acute. Sue and I are both retired now and we're not getting any younger. Huw needs 24 hour care and we were exhausted.

How did you learn of April Complete Care Solutions?

It was actually a social worker who suggested April Complete Care.

Who are the carers from April?

Lily is a carer and has looked after Huw for 11 years. Sandra is a qualified nurse and has cared for him for five years. Sandra and Lily are members of Huw's dedicated team of staff from April.

What care do they provide?

Sue and I look after Huw from 5.30pm until 10pm and then we get help through the night and then from 8am until 5.30pm Monday to Saturday. Huw gets fed constantly through a PEJ feeding system and has seizures. If he doesn't get oxygen when needed, it could be fatal.

Huw starts his day at 8am with a bath and his care continues throughout the day. Lily and Sandra not only cater for Huw's physical needs but they also show him affection.

They are really tactile with him, stroking his forehead and his arms. They really care for Huw.

Does Huw respond to this?

Oh yes, he lets you know when he's in a grouchy mood but also lets you know when he's well and happy. He's particularly vocal in the afternoon. He loves music.

What does having this help mean to you and Sue?

We can look after Huw through the day and we're fresh for him. It's no fun trying to look after a young man with severe disabilities when you're tired yourselves. With April's help I've managed to do a degree and I'm studying for more qualifications. Sue is a volunteer for Scope which befriends and supports parents with children with disabilities. Knowing that Huw's needs can be catered for allows us peace of mind. April's help and support is invaluable to us.

