



PRESS RELEASE

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CARE HOME GROUP ANNOUNCES CHEF OF THE YEAR WINNER

The Head Chef at Nesfield Lodge Care Home, Leeds was crowned **Chef of the Year**, in the inaugural event run by Orchard Care Homes, a new initiative by the leading provider of elderly and specialist healthcare.

The competition, open to all chefs across the Group's 80+ homes, began in the regions, before seven chefs were invited to the new state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen at the head offices of Unilever Food Solutions in Leatherhead, Surrey. The participating chefs presented their two-course menu to a panel of judges that included Neel Radia, National Chair of the National Association of Care Catering, NACC, Paul Wright, Business Development Chef Elderly Care from Unilever Food Solutions and Dianne Lilley, newly appointed Food & Beverage Manager at Orchard Care Homes.

Winner Angie Pugh prepared a two-course menu that focused on pureed dishes, most suitable for those on a textured modified diet. Dysphagia is a common condition in care homes, and affects many elderly residents resulting in difficulty in swallowing. The Nesfield Lodge Chef had recently undergone training on how to prepare textured modified meals for residents with specific dietary needs. The meals she presented showcased an array of skills and knowledge on both flavour and technique.

Neel Radia said, "I was very impressed by the skills demonstrated by all the finalists. The standard of food preparation and presentation was excellent, and all the dishes were of exceptional quality. To know that this sort of food is being prepared in care homes across the country is fantastic and testament to the culinary talent within the care sector."

The chefs travelled from across the UK, from Sunderland in the North East to Greenwich in Greater London and including St Helens in Merseyside. In a Masterchef-style set-up, they prepared two courses using a fixed care home budget and using ingredients commonly found in the homes.

“This was an opportunity for our cooks and chefs to demonstrate their creativity and skills in a pressurised and high profile environment.’ Comments Dianne Lilley, Food & Beverage Manager. “We wanted to challenge our chefs to see what they could produce. And the result was very impressive.

“But, this was also a moment for us to put the spotlight on the chefs. We want to give credit and recognition to some very talented people who often go overlooked in the home. They should be proud of what they do, and hopefully this competition will inspire other home chefs to strive to do their best.”

“I’m absolutely delighted, I can’t believe it.”, said Angie, “I certainly didn’t think I would win, particularly with the high standard of chefs around me, but this is brilliant.”

Steve Roberts, Head Chef at Eckington Court, Derbyshire, and winner of second place in the competition, said “This has been a great experience, I’ve really enjoyed the event. The level has been high, but I’m really pleased with the outcome and it’s great to have been part of the first year of the competition. I’ll be entering next year and striving for the win.”

Lisa Chappell, Chef at Loxley Court, South Yorkshire, said, “I came third. I’m delighted. I was really nervous at the beginning, it’s quite a big deal, but it has been an enjoyable event.”

Orchard Care Homes is already looking to develop the competition for next year, and will be working closely with Unilever Food Solutions to look at new opportunities. Entries for the awards will be open to all Orchard Care Homes chefs and will begin next summer 2017.

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Notes to editors:

Orchard Care Homes is a leading provider of residential elderly and specialist care with approximately 80 homes across the UK. Orchard strives to be at the heart of the local community and is working in partnerships with national charities. For further information www.orchardcarehomes.com

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