

OUR community

NEWS

Eddie's Quarterly Round-up

Family Survey 2015

Our staff are truly our greatest assets and the latest Family Survey results stand testament to the fantastic work that our staff are doing across all our settings. At a time when national news headlines are bombarding us with updates on chronic underfunding, CQC inspectors branding settings as failing and, generally, a care system in crisis, it's really heartening to find that 93% of the families of the people we support agree that our services are safe and provide good outcomes. For more information, please turn to page 8.

'Good' CQC Reports

Both Heron House and Bon Secours were inspected by the regulator over the summer and received 'Good' overall ratings. A huge thank you and well done to both of the teams involved. A link through to both reports on the CQC website is available via the relevant service pages on our website.

Supported Living

Our Herne Bay Supported Living service launched in the summer, under the auspices of our newly instated Supported Living Manager Cheryll Champion. Cheryll is currently in discussions with a housing charity to look at opening up more opportunities across Kent. Turn to page 3 for more information.

Referral Incentive

We're introducing an incentive of £200 for any staff member who refers someone to us, who then goes on to start benefitting from our accommodation and / or support services. The only small print is that the staff member must have completed their probationary period and, if they joined us post April 2015, passed the Care Certificate.

Quarterly Staff Survey

We sent out the first of our new, bi-annual, staff surveys alongside the October payslips. We want to learn what we are doing well and where we can make improvements. The answers will remain anonymous and the findings discussed with the Staff Consultative Committee. Please complete your survey and pop it in the box provided in your setting if you haven't done so already.

Equality & Diversity Steering Group

We're setting up an Equality & Diversity Steering Group, which will be chaired by our Chief Operating Officer Richard McKenzie and will focus, amongst other things, on our Shine model for staff and the workplace values contained therein (see page 2 for more information) ensuring that all our staff receive equal opportunities to achieve. If anyone is interested in taking part in the group, please contact HR Manager Nikki Kerry on 01843 822 508 or email nikki.kerry@optimacare.co.uk.

Eddie Coombes, CEO

Partnership working

WE RECENTLY hosted the first in a series of quarterly cross-industry forums, led by Denise Banks, Optima Care's Community Living Director, bringing together providers and also community, crisis and forensic teams across the South East with a view to ensuring improved partnership working and a consistency in framework support. As a result of the first forum, we are going to look at, amongst other things, making experience days at The Chilterns available to local police trainees.

In his capacity as Chair of Care England's LD Working Group, Optima Care's CEO Eddie Coombes will be using the findings



From Confinement to Community: ensuring a smoother journey for all individuals on the secure pathway

of these forums to help inform the provider response to NHS England's 'Transforming Care Programme'.

In addition, the findings will be shared with the nationwide Recovery & Outcomes Groups to help inform their work in implementing My Shared Pathway.

Optima's TMVA courses

WE NOW have our own TMVA and General Services Association accredited trainers and have begun promoting the availability of tailored courses to staffing agencies and other providers.

We can tailor one, three or five day courses to individual



organisational need with content ranging from the theory to the practical, including floor-work, breakaway and de-escalation techniques. The emphasis throughout is on de-escalation and safety. For more information, go to www.optimacare.co.uk/tmva-training



Jay & Chris work with the people we support and are also now accredited TMVA trainers

STAFF COMPETITION! TURN TO PAGE 8 >>

Dedicated training support for all

In line with our pledge to provide tailored training and development programmes to all staff, we've recruited a dedicated, full-time trainer.

Christina Harrison joined us recently from a company called Edify where she worked as a freelance trainer in health and social care.

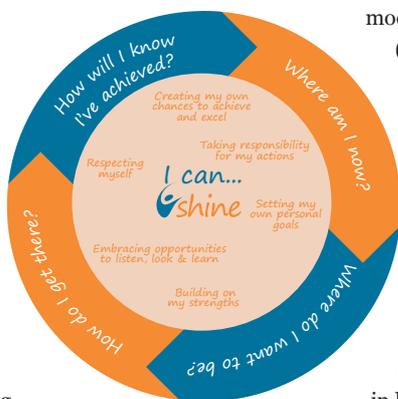
Some staff may already be familiar with Christina as she has been delivering training at Optima Care for a number of years. What's more, she has worked as a Support Worker so she understands the role very well and ensures that her training is delivered in a very practical way.

Christina is initially focusing on ensuring that

all mandatory training is completed and will then turn her attention towards supervision and appraisal training in line with Optima's Shine model and workplace values (see image to left).

Christina will be helping to develop more bespoke programmes for staff, in line with personal development plans. This might include mentoring and coaching around specific job roles and skills, external training in line with developing

knowledge on specific learning disabilities and also advocacy training.



"I'm here to support all staff so I would really like people to tell me what they want in the way of training. As long as it will help you to develop and Shine in your role, there's no such thing as a daft idea! For example, learning how to make cup cakes might not be, on the face it, vital to your role but if it will help make a difference to the people we support then it should be considered."



CHRISTINA

New starters give the thumbs up!

The first induction course was a huge success with many also completing their Care Certificate theory. Here are a few comments from our latest trainees:



"The training has benefitted me a lot and given me a great insight into Optima: as I'm in the kitchen I don't really get involved with the people we support. It was a bit daunting on day one when I saw the size of the folder but I've completed it all and I feel really proud of myself. It's given me lots of self-esteem and confidence."

Caron Smith, Kitchen Assistant, Eastry House



"I can't believe I managed to complete the whole work book in a week! I now have a really good overview of everything and a better understanding of what other people do, from manual handling, health & safety to food & nutrition and care plans. It's given me a good impression of the company."

Deborah Freestone, Support Worker, The Chilterns



"I've worked in dementia care for the past two years but this is a whole new area so the training was really useful. I enjoyed the opportunity of meeting colleagues from other settings and gaining different perspectives on things. Everyone helped each other out, which was great. I thoroughly enjoyed the training and left with the impression that Optima is a very thorough and professional company."

Gary Bushell, Support Worker, Heron House

Recovery & outcomes update

Outcome measures

Staff are to be trained in outcome measures, helping to enable the people we support to achieve their personal goals and lead a more independent life.

Optima Care's Shine model of therapeutic care provides the foundation for our recovery and outcomes based approach - basically helping to ensure that the individual remains at the centre of everything we do.

The way in which we measure an individual's progress towards their goals is by taking note of and assessing changes in behavior. This is something with which all our support workers and enablement coordinators can - and will - be involved.

Optima Care's Clinical Psychologist Dr Heleen Malherbe is providing training to staff at The Chilterns in this regard and has also now begun rolling it out across other settings.



Dr Heleen Malherbe

Pathways planning

Alongside this work, Community Living Director Denise Banks is putting together training on the way in which the Shine model can



Denise Banks

be applied to the person-centred planning process across all settings. This is already being applied at The Chilterns and Denise will be working with managers across all the other Optima settings to help tailor the approach to their individual services over the coming months.

My Shared Pathway

Finally, our Business Development Manager Aly Hammond is ensuring that Optima Care is engaged with the nationwide Recovery & Outcomes Group - helping to ensure a smoother transition out of hospital and into the community for individuals on the My Shared Pathway initiative.



Aly Hammond

Thanks to our recovery and outcomes based approach and cross-industry partnership working we are able to provide useful information, resources and input - particularly with regards to the provider perspective and making My Shared Pathway relevant to community residential services.

Optima in talks with housing charity

Following the launch of Supported Living in Herne Bay, Optima Care is now in discussions with a housing charity with a view to facilitating improved access to rental properties across Kent for individuals looking for Supported Living accommodation – with or

without support services.

Cheryll Champion, Supported Living Manager at Optima Care, commented: “We’ve had a great initial response to our Herne Bay properties and support services and we’re now in a position to extend our reach.”

John loves his new pad!

John recently moved into his new place – a one-bedroom bungalow in Herne Bay – and has been enjoying choosing his own décor and other furnishings to help personalise his bungalow. John was living in a residential setting at Gate House – part of Optima Care, but the staff felt his individual needs would be better met in a Supported Living environment. It was felt that the ability to have more control over his environment would have a positive effect on his mood and behavior. The positive impact on John was almost immediate. He is now much more relaxed and is exhibiting signs of independence – enjoying cooking and crafts in his flat and regular outings.



Thumbs up from John!

Day centre collage

Visitors to the day centre at Eastry are now welcomed by a beautiful collage of the building courtesy of a group of the people we support.

The group had a great time putting together the collage – from the initial design idea to gathering together the materials and cutting them carefully to shape and then securing them together. The end result speaks for itself.



Teresa helping Steven from Seahaven who is blind



Eileen, Mill House and Martin, Eastry House - busy creating



George, Mill House and Steven working together



The end result!

The day centre news: In brief

Creative bug

Inspired by their experience helping with the collage (and not wanting it to end!) Eileen, Marion and Karen decided to design their own individual collages.



Eileen, Mill House



Marion, Seahaven



Karen, Bon Secours

Underwater life

The people we support have also been busy turning a corner of the day centre into a colourful underwater life scene.



Blooming glory!

Thanks to the attention and care of our gardening enthusiasts the new raised beds created this year are looking wonderful.



Ian from Kingsdown Lodge tending to the plants and flowers

Working group

We’ve set up a working group involving the day centre staff and led by our COO Richard McKenzie to look at how we can build upon all the current great activities to also provide more structured education and training in line with our Transition and Supported Living services. In addition, we’re looking at opening up the resource more to families.

Ben's sunflower competition

A competition to grow the biggest and best sunflower was initiated over the summer months by Ben from Spenser Road and the people we support at the day centre came up trumps.

Green fingered Ben came up with the idea and wanted to run the competition himself. He sent out emails and posters to all of Optima Care's settings and also the service centre in Manston to help generate interest in taking part in the competition to grow the best sunflowers over a 3 – 4 month period.

Ben visited the various settings to judge the entries and decided that the people we support at the day centre were the winners. He



presented them with a tin of chocolates and a certificate. Well done Ben on a great initiative.

Community news: In brief



Spenser Road welcomes friends and family

Spenser Road Macmillan fundraiser

The team at Spenser Road held a coffee morning at the end of September in support of Macmillan. It was very well attended by the people we support, their family members and staff, who all baked cakes and contributed to a raffle and games. The team raised £136.52 for the charity. A fantastic result.

Staff achievements

A huge well done to two members of staff at Spenser Road for completing their respective training courses with flying colours. Debra Checksfield recently completed her NVQ3 and Sonia Freelove completed Health & Social Care Level 3.

Heron House

Staff promotion

Richard Oldfield, a Support Worker at Optima Care for around 6 years, was recently promoted to Senior Support Worker.

Manager Sharon Homewood commented:

"Congratulations to Richard - he's ready to take on the challenge as a Senior and wants to help to further support our individuals to reach their dreams."

Training completed

Carole Alvarez, a night Support Worker at Heron House, recently completed her NVQ3. A big well done from all the team.

Coffee morning

Heron House held a combined Macmillan & Breast Cancer Awareness fundraiser at the setting involving cake decorating, word search, anagrams, tombola and trampolining activities. It was well attended by families as well as staff and the people we support at nearby setting Seahaven.

Carole and Richard - congratulations on promotion and training achievements



Eastry House News Round-Up



Talented Gwyneth

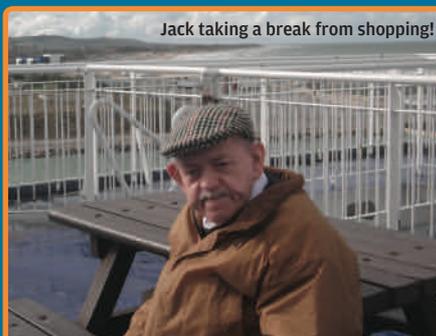
Gwyneth Etheredge, one the ladies we support at Eastry House, continues to be involved in the local monthly church service by playing the piano for them. Gwyneth is an accomplished pianist and learnt to play by ear when she was a child. Gwyneth has played the piano for St Mary's Church in Eastry since she arrived at Eastry House in 2005 and remains an important part of the congregation. She also plays for everyone's pleasure at Eastry House and knows a wide variety of tunes, from the classics to Christmas hymns. Manager Chirsty Lay said: "She inspires many of us - staff included - to sing along."

Meanwhile, Sylvia Condon enjoyed her 80th birthday this summer with a party held in her honour. And Jack Honey enjoyed a duty-free Christmas shopping trip to France.

Finally, two of our staff members Shirley Lisle and Kirsty Brown attended a Touch Therapy course recently to learn to give therapeutic hand massages to the people we support.



Happy 80th Sylvia!



Jack taking a break from shopping!

'Green' themed fundraising for Macmillan

The Chilterns' staff and the people we support recently organised and held four days' of fundraising with a 'green' theme in support of Macmillan.

Everyone had a great time coming up with the ideas for events such as 'Guess the peas in the pot'; 'Green bow challenge'; 'Wear something green'; and culminating with a coffee morning and cake raffle. The gorgeous green cake,

made by our talented chef Andy Williamson, was won by Tanya Richards from finance and administration at The Chilterns.

The photos here also show a taste test where Support Worker Jordan Cowburn tried to see if David, one of the people we support, could tell the difference between a shop bought cake and one made at The Chilterns. Obviously the latter was much, much better!



The Chilterns' cookery school is keeping busy

The cookery school students worked hard to supply all the home-made cakes and biscuits for Macmillan fundraising week at The Chilterns.

Project lead Tammy Stephens said: "Everyone has grown so much in confidence with the various cookery techniques we've gone through since we launched in the summer.

"We also focus on budgeting and try to stick to a maximum of £3 – everyone is still surprised you can cook a healthy meal for this amount."

The group has also been involved in tasting sessions where branded and unbranded products are compared. "This was inspired by one of the guys who only likes to buy the well-known brands. By comparing various products we found that for some items such as baked beans, the brand makes a difference, but for others such as rice and pasta you really can't tell a difference."



Volunteering at Quex House & Gardens

John is enjoying his weekly volunteering, helping to maintain the grounds for Quex Park and the Powell-Cotton Museum.

Quex House and Gardens in Kent dates back to the early 1400s and includes acres of beautiful informal gardens.

Due to the high cost of the upkeep of the garden, it relies on a team of valuable and appreciated volunteers.

The park also houses the Powell-Cotton Natural History Museum.



Food hygiene training

A food hygiene course for the people we support at The Chilterns who are also taking part in the cookery course is being organised.

Support Worker Jordan Cowburn, who also leads on a healthy eating group at The Chilterns, took the initiative to set up the training for the cookery school team. He is meeting with Optima Care's training lead Christina Harrison soon to help put the plans into action. The Chilterns is also trying to engage with Kent Community Health to get staff involved in a Food Champions course.

Horsy fun in Alkham Valley

Therapeutic riding activities and supported placements are all available via the Alkham Valley Community Project (AVCP) and Therapeutic Riding Centre.

The project, which received charitable status in 2008, provides therapeutic activities – including horse riding and carriage driving - for disabled and disadvantaged adults and children to promote their health and wellbeing.

The AVCP is also able to offer placements focused on helping adults with learning disabilities develop life skills. All of the activities take place on the AVCP's 40-acre site between Folkestone and Dover.



For more information, go to www.avcp.co.uk or call the Hoof Hotline on 0797 322 2644.

Kent Supported Employment

Kent Supported Employment recently announced that 1 in 4 individuals are coming out of their programmes with paid work.

Speaking at a local Transition Fair, project lead Lindy Barstow provided some good advice to anyone thinking about getting involved: "Supported employment allows individuals to do up to 16 hours of paid work per week without it affecting their benefits."

"However, it's important to understand the distinction between 'Permitted Work' and 'Supported Permitted Work': 'Permitted' is only available for one year and then the individual would end up on Job Seekers and often cannot find appropriate work. Whereas with 'Supported Permitted' they would be able to continue on up to 16 hours per week for an unlimited timescale."

KCC extends Pathways Service

Following a successful pilot in Dover and Thanet, KCC is extending its Pathways Service across Kent.

The service, which may be accessed via a referral for individuals beyond the age of 18, provides 8 – 12 week support programmes to help individuals with learning disabilities learn

essential independent living skills, such as: transport, budgeting, employment and keeping safe in the community.

For more information, contact your local Gateway Helpdesk. In Thanet, this is situated in Margate Library, Cecil street, Margate, CT9 1RE or call 01843 294 943.

Understanding the Care Act

In addition to a raft of information on its website, KCC has also now published an Easy Read booklet to help individuals understand what the Care Act means for them - including what people should be able to get and what councils have to do.

To download or request a copy, or to read about the Care Act in more detail, please go to www.kent.gov.uk/careact or call 03000 41 99 94. The Department of Health has also produced a guide to the Care Act, which is available via their website: www.gov.uk/careandsupport

Employability matters

Tuck by Truck is a mcch social enterprise supporting adults with a learning disability into employment.

The service, which supplies snack trays to businesses within the local area, provides support to individuals to develop work-related skills. Staff are given paid employment opportunities and they are also supported to find open employment as confidence grows.

Go to www.tuckbytruck.org.uk for more information.

mcch
tuck by truck

snack trays delivered to your company

driving your hunger away!

The Care Act
What does it mean for you?
Information for people receiving a service from Kent County Council Adult Social Care

Easy Read

KCC work for you
kent.gov

KCC working for you
kent.gov.uk/careact

Kent County Council

Optima takes part in NHS pilot

Optima Care is helping to pilot 'Tap to Tag', a technology inspired way of ensuring that important information on an individual's health and wellbeing is immediately accessible to their support workers, family and the local hospital and paramedics in case of hospital admission.

The scheme was borne out of 'My Healthcare Passport', a booklet containing important information on an individual's health, their communication preferences, key contact people etc, which is handed out when individuals with learning disabilities are admitted to hospital.

However, usage by hospitals of the passports is hit and miss, so the programme lead at East Kent Hospitals University Daniel Marsden is hoping to put in place a system that is used universally. Instead of writing information in a booklet, 'Tap to Tag' stores everything on a chip inserted into either a wristband, key fob or bank style card: all three are being tested as part of the trial.

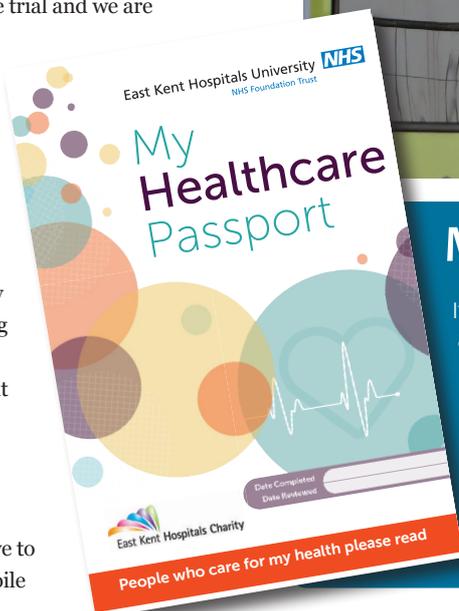
Cheryll Champion, Supported Living Manager at Optima Care, is the organisation's representative on the trial and we are hoping that one or two of the people that we support will volunteer to take part.

Cheryll comments: "I can see huge benefits of this system – particularly in a Supported Living environment - that's why I was keen to put up my hand and get involved.

"To explain how it works, say someone collapses, all you have to do is hover your mobile

phone over the tag and it provides you with key and relevant health information on the individual, including vital preferences such as 'I do not like to be touched'. It can be set up to

automatically text the individual's family and or their support setting. Plus hospitals and paramedics can access the individual's medical information via their own log-in."



My Healthcare Passport

It's somewhat surprising that the 'My Healthcare Passport' isn't more widely known about and used as it is a great communications initiative and one that we're planning to roll-out across all our settings.

Designed by a community of hospital staff, people with learning disabilities, carers, care workers and community health and social care professionals, the passport is intended to be handed out when individuals with learning disabilities are admitted to hospital.

Protecting yourself

Local District Partnership Groups in Kent have recently focused much of their meetings on helping individuals protect themselves from abuse and KCC has produced some useful guides, including an Easy Read booklet.

The booklet looks at the various types of abuse – from physical to financial and

neglect. It outlines what you can do and how to report abuse in Medway and Kent. For more information go to www.kent.gov.uk/adultprotection

The booklet shown here is available in different languages and on a hearing CD. Call 03000 41 61 61.



Feedback from our families

Our families have spoken! And as the overall findings of our annual Family Survey show, our staff have a reason to be proud of all their hard work and, moreover, the obvious dignity and respect that they are demonstrating to the people we support and their families.

Overall, 93% of the families of the people we support agree (with the majority - 72% - agreeing strongly) that our services are safe and provide good outcomes.

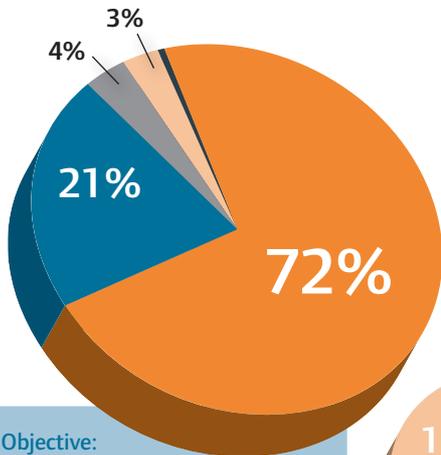
94% also agree (of those, 63% strongly agree)

that we provide appropriate facilities for the optimal care of the people we support and ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and all visitors to our premises.

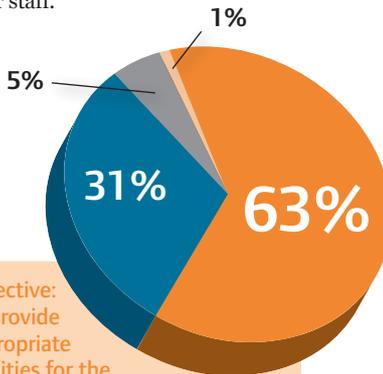
Finally, over half of our families (55%) agree that we are exceeding the expectations of the people we support, their carers and loved ones.

We'll be further analysing the results over the coming weeks and looking at where we can make improvements but, overall, these are fantastic results and a huge well done goes to all our staff.

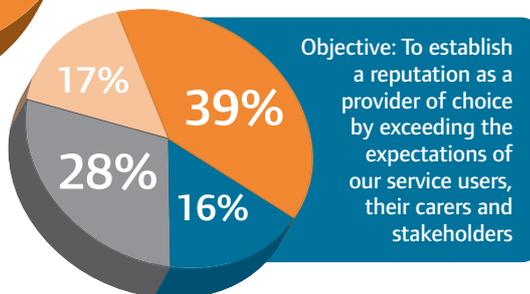
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



Objective: To ensure that our services are safe and provide good outcomes by involving everyone who uses our services



Objective: To provide appropriate facilities for the optimal care of our service users and to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all visitors to our premises and our staff



Objective: To establish a reputation as a provider of choice by exceeding the expectations of our service users, their carers and stakeholders

Not a lot of people know that...

*Steve Besant
Team Leader
at The
Chilterns:*

"Three years ago I started running to lose weight. I'm now a seasoned runner and eventer and loving it. I've even got into Pickleball..."



I started running two to three times a week with Motiv8 Sports 3 years ago in an effort to lose weight. Once I got into the swing of it I started entering events - some are organised by Thanet Road Runners and I find out about others through Runners' World magazine.

I did the Wallbanger Run earlier this year, a 4.5km run from Broadstairs Harbour to Ramsgate Harbour and back. I'm stepping up to a 10 miler this December!

Sometimes my wife gets involved too. We did the Turkey Run together last Christmas!

I've now lost 2.5 stone, which is great but I also get other benefits from running in terms of it being a great stress reliever and there's also the social aspect.

Through Motiv8 Sports I found out about Pickleball. This is a US-inspired game designed for all ages and abilities. It's played on a badminton-sized court (with a lower net) with an aerated ball and special Pickleball paddles - think over-sized table tennis bats!

I play this competitively now to the point where I'm entered into a mixed doubles tournament in Amsterdam next year. It's more serious than it looks!

WIN

Competition! £100 prize

This is a new competition that will appear in each newsletter and is open to all Optima Care staff (the families of the people we support and their carers can nominate staff members too). Simply let us know in no more than 50 words how you've 'Made a difference' in your job role recently - this can be with reference to how you've made a difference to another team member, the individuals we support or their carers and loved ones. It doesn't need to be a huge thing - just something to show you've gone the extra mile. You can also nominate other people if you think they'll be too modest to tell us! The winner will be voted on by a panel of independent judges! (willing family members of the people we support).

Simply email your entry to Suzanne@optimacare.co.uk by 20th December 2015. The winner will be notified by 31st December 2015 and will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.