

OUR community

NEWS

Eddie's Quarterly Round-up

The Spring edition of our newsletter marks the start of various new and exciting developments for Optima Care:

Launch of Shine

We have designed a new therapeutic model of care that will provide the framework for everything we do going forward - from transitional services for school leavers to adult supported living and high acuity community living - and all staff will be coached and supported in its delivery.

The model sets out a simple 4-step pathway for all of the people we support, namely:

- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to be?
- How do I get there?
- How will I know when I've achieved?

This model was developed to help meet and exceed the requirements of the national Government-led 'Personalisation' agenda, which states that care and support should be built around an individual's personal needs and goals instead of trying to shoe-horn people into a one-size-fits-all service.

Please turn to page 8 for more information.



Schools service launches

THIS MONTH saw the launch of our transitional services for school and college leavers. Underpinned by our Shine therapeutic model of care, the service will provide tailored support to each young person's needs, with the goal of ensuring that individuals feel confident to move on to adult supported living wherever possible.

We've been busy visiting local SEN schools to gain their expert input into the design of our new transition pathways, which will be heavily focused on continuity of support - particularly with regards to communications skills practiced at school. In line with this, we've enlisted a Speech & Language Therapist to provide sessional support. This addition will further strengthen our expert in-house multi-disciplinary team, which already includes a clinical psychologist and consultant psychiatrist.

Along with the requirement for 'continuity' for school and



college leavers, we also recently registered our day centre at Eastry with ASDAN: a British charity organisation which helps young people, post school age, to further develop their life and vocational skills. A selection of ASDAN programmes, designed with special education needs in mind, will soon be offered at the day centre. Please turn to page 4 for more information on what's happening at the day centre currently.



Denise Banks

LaingBuisson Awards

A huge congratulations goes to Denise Banks, Clinical Services Manager at The Chilterns, who reached the finals of the prestigious LaingBuisson Independent Specialist Care Awards. Denise's awards entry focused on her design of a personalised pathway to fill a gap that she identified in the Department of Health's programme with regards to the transition from secure to non-secure care. Please turn to the back page for photos from the awards dinner.

Summer BBQ planned

We'll be hosting a BBQ for the families of all the people we support on the afternoon of Friday 21st August. Our Eastry Care Village will provide the garden venue and invitations will be sent out soon.

This idea came about as a result of recent discussions with families, where it was suggested that an annual get-together would be a good idea, allowing families to get to know each other better - in effect, the beginnings of an informal support network.

National Care Home Open Day

Care England is trying to get as many care homes across the UK as possible to open their doors to the public on Friday 19th June. The theme for this year is focused on 'The Arts' - anything from arts and crafts to singing and dancing. If you'd like to find out more, turn to page 6 of this newsletter. The service centre staff would be more than willing to help you with the promotion and hosting. Go for it!



Open afternoon

WE'RE HOSTING a 'schools transition service' open afternoon at our Day Centre and Gate House, both part of our Eastry Care Village, on 20th May. We'll be inviting parents, representatives from local SEN schools and also those with transition responsibility within

commissioning teams to come along and meet the team and the people we support. Invitations will be sent out in due course but, in the meantime, if you would like to register your interest, please call 01843 822 508 or email enquiries@optimacare.co.uk.

HEALTH & WELLBEING SPECIAL!
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Eddie Coombes, CEO



Love is in the air at Seahaven



Seahaven's training room was recently transformed into a fine dining establishment, complete with candles, hearts and red roses, thanks to the creative talents of Yvette Hanlon, Senior Support Worker.

A number of the people we support from three different homes came together to enjoy a wonderful three-course meal.

This event followed Yvette's recreation last Autumn of 'Come Dine with Me', which took place over a period of four weeks and encouraged the people we support to plan and cook their own meals for everyone involved. This time, Yvette decided to organise a one-off event where she would treat everyone else to a special home-cooked meal.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the meal and for one couple - Karen and Ben - whose friendship has blossomed since the 'Come Dine with me' experience, it was a particularly special event.



Friday afternoon fever at the day centre

Everyone enjoyed strutting their funky stuff at the day centre's Valentine's disco. Individuals made special hats and decorations, with the support of staff, and then enjoyed a good old boogie.

Monthly disco makes a comeback

At the day centre's recent meeting, where the agenda for the next 6-weeks' activities is set by the people we support, it was voted to reinstate the monthly discos. They will be held on the last Friday of every month, 1.30pm - 3.30pm, from 27th February onwards. Refreshments will be provided. All welcome.



The Chilterns supports local food bank

Thanks to local information picked up by one of the people we support at The Chilterns, the team will now be regularly involved in supporting a local food bank.

Denise Banks, Clinical Services Manager at The Chilterns, said: "Not only will this provide meaningful activity for the people we support but it shows the importance of being part of the local community and it's something that everyone at The Chilterns can get involved in."

Activity Co-Ordinator Jake will circulate more information to the team. He is also organising a central collection point for donations by staff if they wish to provide support to this good cause.



Partnership work with local council

The team at The Chilterns is currently working on a project in partnership with Thanet Council to help maintain the extensive gardens along the sea front, which runs opposite The Chilterns.

Hi-vis vests have been printed with the project name on the back – 'Sea Road Garden Volunteers' – and the team is due to start work

as soon as the weather improves.

Jake, Activity Co-Ordinator at The Chilterns, reports: "A number of our individuals are interested in getting involved. As part of the planning stage, we've already walked around the gardens and discussed ideas to help make the gardens more aesthetically pleasing."



Thank you Theo!

A big thank you to Theo for appearing as the star of the new flyer that we have designed to help promote our transition services for school and college leavers. Theo has come a long way since he arrived at Heron House two years ago. At the age of 18 and weighing 19.5 stone, he was very withdrawn, prone to mood swings and would only eat junk food.



Thanks to positive behavioral support from the staff at Heron House, in conjunction with his parents, he has managed to lose 8.5 stone and is now looking forward to a very positive future.

With the support of staff, he's now looking forward to starting a voluntary placement at The John Graham Centre – a local farming and education facility. He's also keen to explore agricultural courses at a local college.

Spenser Road news: In brief

All smiles at the stables

Three of the people we support at Spenser Road – Linda, Matthew and Peter – love their weekly visits to the Riding for the Disabled Centre at Cobbs Meadow, Canterbury. They have all now passed their first stages of horse riding with one of our ladies Linda – who is blind – able to now guide her horse unaided with the just the voice of the instructor for help.



Staff working towards diplomas

Five members of staff at Spenser Road are now well on their way to gaining diplomas in health and social care. Manager Kerry Crane said: "I'm very proud of the efforts being put in by the team. They're not only carrying out their day-to-day jobs but also studying hard behind the scenes to gain their diplomas. A number of members of staff are also interested in starting distance learning courses in Mental Health training, Team Leadership and End of Life Care." A big "well done & keep going!" to Debra Checksfield, Sonia Freelove, Deborah Beaney, Karen Howard and Tracey Dean.

Heron House gets 'Frozen'

We've tried to steer clear of Christmas related news in this edition of the newsletter as we're all a bit past it quite frankly! However, Heron House put in such a tremendous effort to transform the place into what could easily be mistaken as a stage set from the Frozen movie that we felt it worthy of a picture tribute here...



Day Centre widens its appeal

The day centre is about to offer life skills and vocational training programmes alongside its usual timetable of popular activities. As mentioned on the front cover of the newsletter, the day centre is now registered with ASDAN: a British charity organisation that provides programmes tailored to young people post school age.

In line with our new transition services for school leavers, we wanted to help ensure continuity of some of the life skills and vocational training that our young people will have started at school.

We're currently assessing the many programmes provided by ASDAN, with a view to putting together a selection that will be offered at the day centre.

Rest assured that much of the usual, and very popular, activities at the day centre will remain in place. We have plans to add an extra room to help ensure that this happens.

Can cook! Will cook!

Following the popularity of the day centre's 6-week cookery course, the team wanted to ensure that our less able individuals could still get involved in cooking, even if they couldn't complete all aspects of the course. The pictures show Eileen from Mill House doing just that. The day centre's Teresa McDonald commented: "There are always ways to ensure that an individual's goals are met, no matter what the disability. We hope more people will be encouraged to follow Eileen's lead."



Day Centre News: In brief

Team meeting

Following the latest team meeting where the agenda for the next few weeks' activities is set by the people we support, there was huge support for the new allotment project and a number of individuals said they wanted to start a photography group (more info soon) and also do flower arranging and bird house making. So, along with the continuation of some favourite activities, we're starting some new projects (more info below).

Bird house project

The woodcraft group recently started a new project to build bird houses. Teresa has sourced various patterns and now the day centre team are supporting our individuals in the learning of various skills, including sawing, shaping and hammering, in order to build their own individual creations.



Ben from Spenser Road gets the project going!



Green-fingered June and Teresa

Flower arranging

A number of the people we support were very keen to start a flower-arranging group. And, as the photos show, June for one has clearly got a knack for it!



Monthly disco

The monthly disco is making a comeback! The last Friday of every month, 1.30pm - 3.30pm. Everyone welcome.

Allotment project

The staff at the day centre are also very excited to announce that they're about to start developing an allotment in the grounds, under the guidance of an expert from The Garden Gate project: a

community garden with charitable status, based in Thanet, the main aim of which is "to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of people experiencing mental ill health and / or learning disability". Everyone is welcome to get involved.

Beautiful blinds

A big thank you and well done to everyone who helped create our new blinds. It was a brilliant effort by both staff and the people we support. The new blinds not only look professional but are lovely and bright. The patterns and colours were all chosen by our individuals at the day centre. Well done all!

Deciding on the activity schedule in front of our lovely new home-made blinds



Local CCG partnerships set to bring positive results

A number of our managers and staff are now working in partnership with their local NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to help improve the health and wellbeing of the people we support. There's a wealth of free advice, information and training available from CCGs but it's not always easy to find. On this page, we take a look at what's happening to this end across Optima Care and provide information to help others get involved.

Food champions at The Chilterns

Two of The Chilterns' staff are set to benefit from a free 2-day training course on how to put the theory of healthy eating into practice, followed by a 12-month programme of mentoring by a member of the nutrition team at Kent Community Health.

Jordon Cowburn, a Support Worker at The Chilterns, already leads on a healthy eating group at the setting and takes a weekly walking group. Together with Christine May, who works in the kitchen, Jordan volunteered to take part in the programme and both will soon be well on their way to becoming Food Champions.

The programme was set up in 2009 to support



people who work or volunteer in the local communities of east Kent and who advocate the benefits of healthy eating. It offers training in basic nutrition but, perhaps more importantly, also the skills needed to encourage the people we support to improve their healthy eating habits, as well as specialist support in putting the theory into practice.

The Chilterns' manager Denise Banks was responsible for finding out about the course. "This is a great programme that all our services could get involved in," she comments.

To find out more, go to www.thanetccg.nhs.uk/services/healthy-living/

Wellbeing mental health

The council-led Six Ways to Wellbeing initiative helps to highlight small changes that individuals can make to their life, which can make a big difference, namely:

- Be active
- Keep learning
- Give
- Connect
- Take Notice
- Care for the Planet

The website at www.liveitwell.org.uk is packed with free resources, hints and tips – plus a series of free seminars (see below) – on ways to lift your mood and help you to cope when life gets stressful. It includes stories of people across Kent, who are doing simple, enjoyable things that make a big difference to how they feel.

Free Six Ways to Wellbeing Seminars:

- 8 April – Maidstone
- 3 June – Ashford
- 9 September – Maidstone

Big strides towards better health

Health Walks are happening all across east Kent. They are free, short, volunteer led, local walks aimed at those who wish to be more active. And, what's more, they are all-inclusive and many include wheelchair routes. Two of our individuals at Kingsdown Lodge – Simon Avey and Karen Honess – are now enjoying weekly health walks in Deal.

With the support of their key workers, they thoroughly enjoy the social aspect of the walks and the potential health and weight-loss benefits are obviously an added – albeit hidden! – bonus.

A timetable of walks across all localities is available at www.kenthealthandwellbeing.nhs.uk or call the Health Walk Coordinator on 0300 123 1220.

East Kent Health Walks 2015
covering Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale & Thanet

What is a Health Walk?
Health Walks are free, short, volunteer led, local walks aimed at those who wish to be more active. Walks are generally between 40-90 minutes and leave from accessible venues such as libraries and leisure centres. No need to book, just turn up for a free Health Walk. Most of the Health Walks finish with refreshments and a chat.

Walk Key:
 ● = gentle stroll, suitable for beginners
 ● = brisker walk, slightly further distance
 ● = faster pace, longer distance or rough ground
 ● = 90 minutes plus (beyond Walking for Health)

♿ = ♿ friendly 🚻 = toilet break available during walk

Where	When	Start Time
Walking for Fitness Conningbrook Hotel car park Canterbury Rd Kennington ASHFORD TN24 2QR	Mondays	9:30am (for 9:45 start)
Charing Surgery, Charing ASHFORD TN27 0HZ	Mondays	9:30am (for 9:45 start)
Smarden Charter Hall, Chessenden Lane, Smarden, ASHFORD TN27 5NF	Mondays	9:30am (for 9:45 start)

best foot forward
walking for health

Want to get more active? Then we're here to help!
Walking is a great way to get fit, explore what's on your doorstep and make new friends.
Join one of our free and friendly short walks today.

Visit our website to find out more about your local health walks:
walkingforhealth.org.uk

Many ways to make positive changes

There are a number of local healthy living services available across the various Kent County Council localities. The Food Champion programme and HealthWalks detailed on this page represents just a couple of key initiatives. In addition, there are exercise referral schemes, physical activity and nutrition teams and also specialist weight management services.

Information on all these programmes may be found at www.kenthealthandwellbeing.nhs.uk.

Seahaven supports National Care Home Open Day



Sharon Head, Manager of Seahaven, has pledged her support for National Care Home Open Day on 19th June and is now planning a fun-packed day, in conjunction with the staff and people we support at the setting.

The theme of this year's event is 'The Arts and Valuing Staff' and it seems that Seahaven already has a number of budding artists ready to welcome the local Deal community as the stories on this page prove testament.



■ DON'T DELAY! SIGN UP TODAY!

This event, run by Care England, represents a great way of reaching out to the local communities in which we live and work and shouting about all the positive things that we do. By doing so, we help ensure that the people we support enjoy a full and meaningful life. It also helps to challenge some of the long-standing perceptions and misconceptions that are often associated with care homes.

Although, in the past, the event has been dominated by elderly residential care homes, Care England reports that last year saw an increase in participation by settings caring for adults with learning disabilities and they'd like to encourage many more to sign up.

Settings may choose their own theme or use the suggested theme of 'The Arts & Valuing Staff'. The art forms you might want to consider are:

- Theatre / drama
- Music
- Singing
- Painting
- Photography
- Dance

You could also perhaps invite along representatives from one of the many external activity groups that our individuals attend - with a view to them either performing or helping to co-ordinate activities.

If you'd like to find out more, various free resources, hints and tips may be found at www.nationalcarehomeopenday.org.uk. Alternatively, email our Marketing and PR Lead at Suzanne@optimacare.co.uk.

Suzanne would be happy to help you organise an event and promote it locally.



Seahaven news: In brief

■ Patrick's got talent

With the support of staff, Patrick loves to attend the Landmark Centre in Deal each week where he gets involved in playing percussion and singing.



Seahaven for her dedication and hard work in both rearranging her schedule to help out where needed, and also using her initiative to source a multitude of external activities to help meet the goals of the people we support. In addition to many other things, Sonia takes our individuals to Martellos - a mini college - in Folkestone to enjoy cooking and woodworking courses. Thank you Sonia!

■ Friends through play

The soft play centre in Faversham is open for adults on certain days of the week and two of the people we support - Patrick and Simon - are regulars. Kylie McGarvey, deputy manager at Seahaven, said: "Patrick and Simon have struggled with a clash of

personalities in the past but attending soft play together seems to have really helped build their relationship."



■ M.A.P.S. Activities

A number of the people we support at Seahaven are enjoying the socialising opportunities and activities afforded by Mark's Activity Programme Service in Canterbury and Deal. The activities available include games and puzzles, arts and crafts, a digital drum kit and other musical instruments. For more information, go to www.mapsactivityprogrammes.co.uk.

■ Well done Zoe

A big "congratulations!" to Zoe Lamb for completing her NVQ3. Manager Sharon Head commented: "Formal training is never easy when staff are also working and doing their level best for the people we support, so this is a great achievement by Zoe. Well done."

■ Well done team!

A quick note from Kylie to say thank you to the entire Seahaven team for their work in the transition of Jack. It was truly a team effort and everyone showed incredible determination, support - and energy! - in the face of some very challenging behavior. Thank you all.

■ Thank you Sonia

A special thank you goes to flexi member of staff Sonia Hart from the team at

Supported Living launches

We have added to our range of specialist services with the launch of Supported Living. A number of our single services have now been set aside for this purpose, effectively giving our people the option to live independently within their own home. Our support team will agree a package of care with the individual, their family or carer: this may be anything from two hours a week to go shopping, to 24/7 care. One of the people we support - John – recently moved to a Supported Living environment. And Ray is doing so well in one of The Chilterns' self-contained flats that he's now looking at moving on. Here are their stories:

■ JOHN'S STORY

John, age 33, is diagnosed with Autism, Tourette's syndrome and moderate learning disabilities. After living in Gate House, the staff team felt that John had reached a stage where his individual needs would be better met in a Supported Living environment. John finds it difficult to tolerate noise and the residential environment no longer suited him. It was felt that the ability to have more control over his environment would have a positive effect on his mood and behavior.

In conjunction with John's parents and care support team, a personalised transition pathway was designed - together with a pictorial schedule for John's benefit - and over a period of time John moved into one of Optima Care's self-contained flats. He enjoyed choosing his own furniture and other items and also did some re-decorating to help personalise the flat. John received continuity of support from his regular staff team, who have moved with him.

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. Thanks to a combination of person-centred planning, positive behavior support and pictorial scheduling, John is able to express his daily wants and needs. He enjoys regular outings and seems more able to mix with others.

"John is so much happier and calmer now," says his mum. "The staff are brilliant. They have really got to know John and jelled with him. Although he isn't able to speak, he communicates with the staff using Makaton and pictures. He now gets out and about a lot. They've really helped him become much more independent."

■ RAY'S STORY

Ray, aged 30, has lived at The Chilterns in Kent for around two years. Over that time, he has been successful in moving from fully supported residential care to now living in one of The Chilterns' self-contained flats. He now does all his own cooking, cleaning, budgeting and shopping. In addition, Ray does voluntary work twice a week in a local charity shop and also volunteers to help at a dog show once a month. He's also a keen footballer and plays for a local team.

Discussions are now taking place between Ray and his support staff to try to ensure that he is supported in moving out of the setting and renting his own property - either from Optima Care or the local authority - within the next 6 - 12 months.



Eastry news: In brief

■ Budding artists

The people we support at Gate House have been busy doing their own pieces of artwork to help personalise the setting.

■ Community life

George from Eastry Villas is thoroughly enjoying attending a local day centre. He attends three days a week, doing everything from cooking, gardening, pottery, sewing and music sessions. It is an important part of his week and he is always keen to go.



George loves the day centre!

■ Goodbye Doug!

Doug has gone to live in Dover with his girlfriend Carol in their own 2 bedroom house in a supported living setting. We wish Doug and Carol lots of luck and look forward to a wedding invite later in the year.



We'll miss you Doug!

■ Marlene Dietrich!

Our elderly residents at Eastry House enjoyed a rendition of songs from the 1940s and 1950s by a Marlene Dietrich impersonator. They were all totally wowed by the performer who, apparently, sounded exactly like the German - American singer and actress.

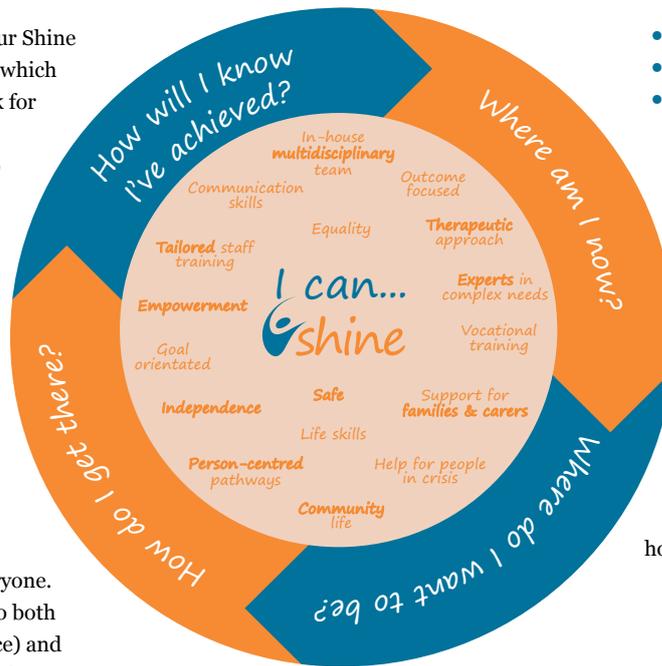
The independence specialists

We're getting set to launch our Shine therapeutic model of care, which will provide the framework for our services going forward.

The Shine circle visual is designed to show the way in which the individual is at the centre of everything we do. This is being incorporated into brochures to help communicate our new schools transition services and supported living, in addition to our existing high acuity community living services at The Chilterns (step down pathways) and Seahaven (total communication & complex needs).

The model been designed to be as straightforward as possible and non-technical to make it accessible to everyone.

Shine's 4-step approach – applied to both transitions (in to and out of the service) and ongoing person-centred pathways - helps ensure a clear journey through our service towards more independent living:



- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to be?
- How do I get there?
- How will I know I've achieved?

The model is unique in its focus on specialist support provided by a dedicated multidisciplinary team within a community setting. What's more, it is flexible enough to be tailored to individual need.

The reason for developing the model now is that we wanted to help meet and exceed the requirements of the national Government-led 'Personalisation' agenda, which states that care and support should be built around an individual's personal needs and goals instead of trying to shoe-horn people into a one-size-fits-all service.

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LaingBuisson Awards

A huge well done to Clinical Services Manager Denise Banks and her team at The Chilterns, our step down service provider, for reaching the finals of the LaingBuisson Awards.

This was no mean feat as LaingBuisson is the UK's foremost provider of information and market intelligence on the independent health and care sectors. Their Independent Specialist Care Awards represents the most highly regarded accolade available in the UK health and care sectors.

The awards were announced at a gala dinner at the Lancaster Hotel, London, hosted by BBC journalist and news presenter Bill Turnbull.

The Chilterns made it to the finals in recognition of its 4-step transitional pathway, which was designed by Denise, who comments: "Our 4-step transitional pathway and ongoing programme of personalised care is helping to better realise the Department of Health's goal of providing a seamless, recovery-focused and cost-effective service.

"Reaching the finals was a huge achievement for all of the team, and helps greatly in further strengthening our endeavours to provide the very best in personalised care."



L-R Elle, Eddie, Denise & Richard



Denise & Elle met with broadcaster Bill Turnbull

