

# ourcommunity

NEWS

## Eddie's Round-up

### ■ New recruits

In this issue we welcome several new members to the Optima Care team at all levels. We've included a special section giving them space to tell you all about themselves, their experience and some unusual careers before the care sector. **Turn to pages 2-3.**

### ■ Improving care

It is great to see some of the people we support involved in the Kent-based Transforming Care Plan. The plan aims to ensure positive developments in care at both the local and national level in the future, checking that services are high quality and delivering what people need. **See page 6.**

### ■ Inspiring others

There is a strong educational theme to our Spring newsletter with both staff and the people we support signing up to training and educational courses, in the process inspiring and motivating others to follow their lead. Knowledge benefits everyone and everything we do at Optima Care. **See more on pages 6 and 8.**

### Making a difference

Find out who's won this quarterly accolade for both our Kent and London services and read about their great work. **Turn to page 8 for more information.**



Eddie Coombes,  
Chief Executive

# Wellbeing in the workplace

BY LAURA RISPOLI, HR

In May Optima Care marked Mental Health Foundation's *Mental Health Awareness Week* (13-19 May) with a push to encourage all our staff to think about their own mental health at work. Although this year's campaign theme was 'body image' the charity's concerted aim is to raise awareness of mental health issues generally, in all areas of life, including stress management within the workplace.

Mental health problems at work include anxiety and depression. Untreated these can create physical health problems like heart disease as well as problems with our immune system, plus issues with insomnia and digestion. A healthy mind at work is vital because staff with good mental health are more likely to perform well and remain happy and engaged in their work.

Yet it can sometimes be difficult for us to discuss our own mental health issues with each other. It is almost a taboo subject which is a contradiction when at Optima Care we deal with mental health professionally every day in supporting our people.

However at Optima Care we believe in an 'open door' policy towards mental health in the workplace and encourage all our managers to share our

## 10 things that can support wellbeing at work

- Overcoming interpersonal challenges
- Managing emotions
- Guarding against burnout
- Coping with work related stress
- Improving sleep habits
- Remaining calm
- Dealing with difficult people
- Improving communication skills
- Taking on new challenges
- Improving physical health

approach. Therefore we want all staff to know it is okay to talk to their bosses, even their colleagues. Only by talking about it will we be able to break down stereotypes and the stigma and ensure we are educated to seek or offer help.

Most importantly Optima Care assures all staff that if they share a problem they have, we will do all we can to give them the help they need to maintain good mental health both in and out of their workplace.



# Welcome to the team



Amanda Turner



**ROBERT MYCROFT**  
Registered Manager,  
Eastry Villas &  
Gate House

After leaving the army Robert chose to enter the social care profession and has had many roles in his career. He joins us from Voyage Care where he was a Registered Manager. Before that he was a Registered Manager at Embrace. In addition to his registered care qualifications



Kevin Rusbridge

**AMANDA TURNER**  
Registered Manager, SHINE  
Supported Living South East

Amanda joined Optima Care in January and brings huge experience from the health and social care sector including 16 years with Caretech Community Services. Her roles have been focused in area and locality management and most recently as Care Delivery Director and Senior Operations Manager working within the private and charity sectors.

Amanda said: "I have been made to feel so welcome from all levels in the company since joining. Being passionate about making a positive difference to people's lives, it's great to join such a supportive and professional team. The local team here in Herne Bay are demonstrating continued commitment to developing our services with me and I look forward to working with everyone at Optima Care during these exciting times."



Robert Mycroft

he funded his own degree in Intellectual Development Disabilities at University of Kent's Tizard Centre – one of Europe's leading academic and research centres for learning disability and community care.

Robert said: "I joined Optima Care at a challenging period last September when we were opening new services, but everyone was very supportive. Having come from large care companies it's nice to work in a smaller organisation where you can talk directly to people at the top. I was humbled after a recent CQC inspection last November where one staff member, commenting on me, said: they always put people first."

**KEVIN RUSBRIDGE**  
Director of Operations

Our new Director of Operations, Kevin Rusbridge, comes with a wealth of experience to take on the challenges of running an expanding healthcare



company. Kevin joined us from Lifeways in December where he was Regional Director for residential supported and assisted living covering Wales and Southern England, including the home counties and London and was responsible for 127 complex needs sites. Prior to that in his career he was working at a senior level in business development for Caretech Community Services. Kevin has an MBA in Business Administration.

Most interestingly, Kevin was a member of the Royal Marines elite team of 42 Commando, an amphibious 'go-anywhere' unit. Kevin served in the Royal Marines from 1979 to 1990.

Kevin said: "I've worked on the frontline all my life and I believe my extensive experience in logistics and planning will be an asset as Optima Care expands its existing and new sites."

### SARAH CASWELL HR Business Partner

Sarah joined Optima Care in early February. She was previously HR Business Partner at Carewatch Care Services for two years working with Registered Managers to support management and staff in the smooth running of operations.

She entered the world of Human Resources at Christchurch Court Group which specialised in acquired brain injury. Initially, she was the company's Office and IT Manager and this role later developed into the HR position. Her other roles have included working in HR for the NHS Direct 111 emergency out-of-hours service.

Sarah said: "It's been an extremely busy introduction to Optima Care as I've been getting around to see managers and staff in all the services. I've done much listening and been given a lot of feedback which I have already started dealing with. Although our services are widely dispersed from HQ, my door is always open to everyone in the company requiring support."

### FANUEL MATIBENGA SHINE London Supported Living Services

Fanuel is the longest-serving of our new recruits joining as the Registered Manager of our Supported Living Services in London last June. Previously, he worked in adult care with Priory Group. He had a strong background in residential care before he diversified into supported living. He now runs our three services at New Heston Road, Grosvenor Terrace and Half Moon Lane.

Sarah Caswell



Fanuel Matibenga



Fanuel said: "It's great to have joined a company that is growing its specialist services. I've really enjoyed working with the Optima Care team over the past year and I'm looking forward to the challenges ahead."



## And finally, a farewell...

Chirsty Lay is heading off into retirement after nearly sixteen years as Registered Manager with Optima Care at Eastry House. However her team was determined not to let her go quietly, cunningly tricking her into attending a leaving presentation attended by all her colleagues - some coming in specially to say goodbye. A collection at Eastry ensured she headed off with a beautiful cut glass vase and a lovely pen set amongst other gifts.

On behalf of everyone at Eastry House Team Leader, Caroline Cullen said: "After so long at Eastry it was great to give Chirsty such a good send off and we even brought a small tear to her eye. She was a wonderful manager to work with always putting the best interests of our people first and we wish her a long and happy retirement."



# Santa visits Seahaven and Spenser Road

BY SHARON HEAD, REGISTERED MANAGER, SEAHAVEN

It seems like an age away now but our people at Seahaven enjoyed a fantastic Christmas party, attended by Father Christmas - naturally! A special thanks goes to Vikki Murton for her dedication to creating an amazing Santa's Grotto. Despite it being his busiest period of the year he then managed to drop in to Spenser Road to add to everyone's Christmas festivities.



## Door to door

BY SHARON HEAD, REGISTERED MANAGER, SEAHAVEN

Two of our people at Seahaven set out to brighten up their rooms by repainting their bedroom doors with themes they enjoy. One chose pool as his theme and the other individual opted for colourful butterflies as part of our person-centred activities. Working with Jason Wardle from Seahaven maintenance, who interpreted their ideas perfectly, they now have brilliant and bright new entrances to their rooms.



## Spreading Christmas cheer

BY ROBERT MYCROFT, REGISTERED MANAGER, EASTRY HOUSE

Everyone enjoyed a great time in December as Eastry House celebrated National Christmas Jumper Day. There were some great jumpers worn by all and we raised over £40 for our local food bank, just in time for the festive period. The people we support and staff went out and spent the money on treats such as chocolates, biscuits and desserts to give some families a really special Christmas.



## Moving in at Eastry Villas

BY ROBERT MYCROFT - REGISTERED MANAGER, EASTRY VILLAS & GATE HOUSE

A young person we support has moved from Eastry Villas - our main building - in to our separate bungalow. Our team is supporting her with Person Centred Active Support (PCAS) so she can develop and reach her full potential.

"PCAS helps our people engage in whatever is happening - from carrying out all daily household tasks to travelling to visit the shops or visit family and friends. This is a major milestone in this young person's life and I'm confident she'll become increasingly confident in meeting her new challenges."

# Valentine meal in Deal

BY YVETTE HANLON, SENIOR SUPPORT WORKER

One of the ladies we support laid on a lovely Valentine supper in her home at Bon Secours for her boyfriend from Spenser Road. They were joined by others from Spenser Road and Seahaven. They were all treated to a lavish four-course meal. There was prawn cocktail for starters, spaghetti bolognese for main course and caramel cheesecake with cream for dessert - all washed down with a bottle of sparkling fruit juice!

In addition to setting the menu, our Bon Secours hostess shopped for all the food, helped prepare each course, laid the table and decorated the room with red balloons. She still had plenty of puff afterwards to wash and clear up. Her hard work paid off with a lovely Valentine's celebration where lots of fun and laughs were had by all.



## Work to be proud of

BY AMANDA TURNER -  
REGISTERED MANAGER, SHINE  
SUPPORTED LIVING SOUTH EAST

Apart from the warm welcome I received on joining Optima Care I am particularly impressed with the great work achieved at Herne Bay Supported Living. Despite the changes facing staff they have been tremendous in building on the development of our services there. A major goal was reached with one of the people we support gaining their confidence in using their new dentures after coaching by the staff over a two-year period.

There are also exciting times ahead in our supported living services as we improve and develop our support schemes through collaborative work that will be introduced in the very near future.



## Raising money on Red Nose Day

BY SHARON HOMEWOOD,  
REGISTERED MANAGER,  
HERON HOUSE

Heron House and Spenser Road joined in the fun of Red Nose Day and raised money in the process for this great charity. At Spenser Road, cakes were sold as well as raffle tickets resulting in £85 going to important local charity projects. Both families and staff donated prizes. The top prize in Heron House's fundraising activities was a £20 meal voucher for The Rising Sun in nearby Beltinge, kindly donated by a staff member who runs the pub. Representatives from Superior Care also joined us and a great fun day was had by everyone.



## Ready for challenges ahead

BY SHARON HOMEWOOD, REGISTERED MANAGER, HERON HOUSE

"I would like to thank everyone who has given me such a warm welcome at Spenser Road. The team has been working very hard with me from the start. Despite the recent management changes, they remain highly motivated and ready to take on the challenges ahead as we support our people. Thanks to everyone and well done!"





## Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring

As the days grew longer after Christmas our Garden Project Group at The Chilterns has been busy preparing a vegetable plot in our back garden ready for planting. They plan to grow it, cook it, and then eat it. What could be more healthy than organic home-grown food outside the kitchen door!



## News round-up

BY JULIE MOORE, REGISTERED MANAGER, THE CHILTERN

### Transforming care

**T**wo of the people we support have been instrumental in promoting the work of our local Transforming Care Forum.

In March they were invited to help Bemix\* (formerly Skillnet Group), which runs the forum, to present its recommendations to the Kent & Medway Transforming Care Board. Their ideas will inform the Board's strategy

to improve services for people with learning disabilities and/or autism (including those with a mental health condition) through its five-year Transforming Care Plan.

\*Bemix run projects which support people with learning difficulties and/or autism to learn skills, gain qualifications and become more confident and independent.

### Education, education, education

**S**ome great news to report as one of our people has graduated from a health and wellbeing course at our local college. This achievement has encouraged others to sign up at the college to study subjects such as Maths, English, Mind and Body and Creativity.

It is great to see our people developing their knowledge and skills independently and motivating each other in the process.



### A Christmas makeover

**C**hristmas can be a difficult time of the year for some and people find different ways to cope with the stress that can often accompany the festive period. As a way of taking care of herself, as well as

being prepared for Christmas, one of our individuals decided to pamper herself with a makeover. This involved having a new haircut and a manicure before arranging lunch with her Manager.



BY SHARON HEAD, REGISTERED MANAGER, SEAHAVEN

# Our own star baker!

One of the people we support recently took to the kitchen to demonstrate his bread-baking skills. Despite being registered blind and with a little help from staff he recently prepared and baked this loaf of bread from which he makes his own sandwiches for his packed lunches.

Proudly independent, he mixed all the ingredients together before kneading the dough ready for the oven. He has his own baking tin so we are all looking forward to the lovely smell of freshly baked bread filling the air at Seahaven in future.



## 80 years young

We held a great party on 20th April to celebrate the 80th birthday of one of the people we support. There were lots of presents and a special 80th birthday cake. The birthday girl was joined by her sister and brother-in-law to mark this milestone.



## Getting ahead of the game & the gardening

We are delighted that one of the people we support at Bon Secours is really living her life to the full and we are all particularly proud that she has been awarded her City and Guilds for completing a course in Community Learning and Skills. She has attended college at the adult education centre in Deal every Monday for the past three years and really enjoys her studies, having made many friends too. However there's no stopping our budding student as next year she plans to study cookery at the college.



And we mean there is no stopping her! When she's not studying she is hard at work on her vegetable patch at Bon Secours planting and watering her vegetables as well as tending to her lovely hanging baskets. She would like to say a big 'Thank You' to our terrific maintenance man, Jason Wardle, who has helped her to get started on this year's crop. Our green fingered gardener enjoyed growing her own food so much last year that she is going to be more adventurous this season and is aiming to grow some beetroot, cauliflower and spring onions as well as our annual crop of potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, lettuce and strawberries. Look out for the fruits of her labour in the next issue!





Making a Difference represents our timely way of celebrating and rewarding members of the Optima Care team who have made a difference to another team member, the individuals they support and loved ones.

It is about recognising where employees have gone that extra mile to add to the service and support we offer, in line with our workplace values. In this issue, we celebrate two colleagues from our London and our Kent services, each winning £100.

## LONDON - Beyond the call of duty

In his role at Grosvenor Terrace service in London, Bamidele Olagunju has demonstrated incredible dedication to our people. London Supported Living Manager Fanuel Matibenga says: "Bamidele has continually gone beyond the call of duty to

support the team. He is always on top of his mandatory training, aiming to achieve the highest standards. In particular, he is a huge support to the team in managing the safety of our people to ensure they remain in our care at all times. Well done Bamidele - you deserve it."



## KENT - Inspiring others

Laura Slade at Seahaven has gone beyond her training requirements by completing both her Mental Health Course Level 1 & 2. Manager Sharon Head said: "I'm very proud of Laura's hard work and dedication with regards to bringing more knowledge to her role to help those we support. Not only did she study in her own time, but she has inspired other team colleagues to follow her example and apply themselves to complete the course too."

## Competition! £100 prize

The competition 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 around 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!

Simply email your entry to [Suzanne@optimacare.co.uk](mailto:Suzanne@optimacare.co.uk) by 26th July 2019. The winner will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

WIN

