

ourcommunity

NEWS

Eddie's Round-up

■ Making a difference

We had so many great nominations for our 'Making a difference' initiative this time around that it was really hard to choose a winner. We'd love to give awards to everyone but it's just not possible so, instead, we've got an overall winner and, in addition, we've included the nominations for everyone else: after all, the fact that someone has noticed and taken the trouble to highlight your actions means an awful lot. **See pages 2 – 3.**

■ PECS Training

We've just written and designed a full report – and easy read version – on the back of the PECS training that staff at Gate House underwent around a year ago, funded by Health Education England (HEE). HEE now plans to use this material to promote the great results achieved by our people. The next step for us is to design an in-house training programme to help more staff use PECS with the people we support. **Turn to pages 6 – 7.**

■ News from our services

We've got lots of great stories and achievements, plus photos, to share from across our Kent and London services. See pages 4, 5 and 7 for more information.

■ And finally...

Don't forget you're entitled to a free flu jab this winter. See opposite for information on how to access this.

Eddie

Eddie Coombes,
Chief Executive



Free flu vaccinations

NHS England is offering free flu vaccinations to all eligible staff working in adult social care. To be eligible you have to be directly involved in the care of vulnerable people who are at increased risk from exposure to flu, and you must be employed by a registered residential care home or supported living service.

In other words, all staff in Optima Care's employment are eligible. However, it's down to you to make arrangements to receive it, if you choose do so. It's entirely your choice.

How to access it

You can get the free flu vaccine at your local pharmacy or GP surgery. Not all GP surgeries will be able to offer the flu vaccine though so it's important to call and check before you visit.

To prove you're eligible, you'll need to take identification with you that shows your name and Optima Care's name. This could be:

- An ID card or badge;
- A recent payslip.

Flu is a serious illness for people in vulnerable circumstances. It's worth considering taking up the offer of immunisation to protect yourself, your colleagues and the people you care for and support.



OUR HEROES...

We received a number of nominations this time around, which is testament to our people, their dedication, care and patience with regards to the people we support and their peers. Even though we can only give out one award each time, we wanted to officially recognise – across these two pages – everyone nominated. Well done to all.

The team at Gate House & Eastry Villas

I would like to nominate the whole staff team at Gate and Villas, including a special mention for Chris the Team Leader.

The whole staff team pull together in meeting the needs of all the people we support, including the two new individuals that recently moved in. I started on the 3rd Sept and went on leave on the 18th Sept for two weeks. The new people we support moved in on the 17th, which was a very difficult period as they are very complex and more challenging than our current individuals. As a service we were not ready.

This meant staff needed to pull together because on an average day over 50% of the staff team are agency workers, due to the fact that the service is undergoing a transformation phase. Chris was relied upon by the staff to support and hold them all together even when several received injuries requiring hospital and GP treatment. Without her continued support during a very difficult period we would have lost several staff. Chris demonstrated true passion, tenacity and a caring nature towards her staff and the people we support.

Chris felt she could have done more and didn't do enough.

Chris cannot see that she kept the team together and I often refer to her as the Gate House oracle for the vast amount of knowledge she has concerning the people we support.

From Robert Mycroft, Registered Manager at Gate House & Eastry Villas

Keep up the great work!

Jason Wardle

I would like to nominate Jason Wardle, our maintenance man for the Deal services. In my 30 years in the care sector it is unusual to find such a committed person with regards to delivering a quality service to both the home and the people we support. He has made a difference to the quality of the service: decorating bedrooms according to the preferences of our individuals, mending their televisions, also completing full refurbishments of bathrooms – overall, improving the quality of the environment.

His commitment has seen him coming in the early hours of the morning, plus doing nightshifts to ensure there is less disruption for the people we support.

Susan Bush, Support Worker, says: "His work is fantastic, always with a smile and a willingness to help. He's never too busy to help."

One of the people we support adds: "I love Jason! He helps me. He decorated my room in leopard print wallpaper and made me a television stand."

Kylie McGarvey, Deputy Manager, comments: "Jason's support through all auditing processes has been fantastic and has enabled us to further improve our audit plans, with regards to ensuring person-specific areas for the people we support, adapting the service to suit all their needs."

From Sharon Head, Registered Manager, Seahaven

What a star!

Amazing job!

Chrissie Doolan

I'd like to nominate Chrissie Doolan at Herne Bay Supported Living for the next 'Making a difference' award please. This is in light of her hard work and loyalty.

From Pete Crascall, Regional Manager

Laura McCluskey

I'd like to nominate our staff member Laura McCluskey for making a difference to our service. She has worked at Seahaven for over 10 years. She has always gone above and beyond for the people we support. Her hard work and dedication never faulted throughout her recent pregnancy and she has always been a very core member of our team (her husband Ant us a very valued member of the team too).

From Vikki Murton, Support Worker, Seahaven

Above and beyond!

(From L-R) Raj, Stanislav and Fanuel Matibenga, Registered Manager for the London Services



Well done Stanislav!

A huge congratulations to staff member Stanislav Kovachki from the New Heston Road service for being the latest winner of the 'Making a Difference' initiative.

Stanislav was nominated in recognition of the support he has provided to one of our tenants in particular: in fact the comments we received said he had effectively helped change this individual's lifestyle and habits.

We have been supporting this tenant for around a year. The team have tried lots of activities with him but due to his seizures and problems with mobility, the amount of things they can do is limited.

However, one day Stanislav took the tenant to an outdoor park and encouraged him to do cycling on an exercise bike. Doing this activity

for the first time ever, he discovered he really enjoyed cycling and kept going for around 20 minutes.

Since then, he has been encouraged to engage in other activities at the park. The walk to the part in itself is helping to improve his mobility and the combination of exercise and good food is ensuring that he looks and feels healthy.

Raj Pandey, Assistant Manager at New Heston Road, commented: "We recently had a STOMP review and were able to reduce his medication. His family and professional team are very happy with the progress he has made.

"It's all teamwork here, but it was Stanislav that started the tenant on this route and encouraged other staff to also follow the same path."

WIN

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. The winner will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

Moving on focused

BY JACQUI DAVIS, REGISTERED MANAGER AT THE CHILTERNs

It's been a busy few months at The Chilterns. We have a new manager, Jacqui Davis, and two new activity co-ordinator's Jamie Hill and Sharron French.

Two of the people we support have the opportunity for paid work after being trained to participate in care and treatment reviews. A Care and Treatment Review (CTR) is an independent review of a person's care. It checks that:

- People are safe and getting the right care for them.
- They have good care plans for the future.
- Any problems with their health, safety or care get sorted out.

CTRs are for people with Learning Disabilities, Autism or both, who are in hospital because of a mental health problem, or because

their behaviour is seen as challenging.

They are also for people living in the community who might need to go into a Learning Disability or Mental Health hospital.

Finally - and a totally different note - our dining room, which has been out of action for some time, was reopened in October. The people we support suggested a grand opening ceremony and buffet. They asked Debbie Lett to cut the ribbon. Debbie has been a member of staff at the Chilterns for over 20 years and has seen many changes in that time.

It was great to get everyone together again in the dining room for this opening event and celebration.

Trip to Bournemouth: London services

We also went to Bournemouth for a day trip in the summer and all the people we support enjoyed a swim, with staff observation. Everyone also enjoyed lunch at Nando's. We plan to do lots more of such trips as they're always a great success.



Back together again!

BY CHIRSTY LAY, REGISTERED MANAGER AT EASTRY HOUSE

Since young boys Ted & Leslie lived together in various care establishments in Kent and, over time, a deep friendship grew with each one becoming a source of comfort and company for the other.

As they grew older they would spend time together socialising or going on holidays. They would go on outings with Ted pushing Leslie in his wheelchair. They were a real double act.

When we first met them in 2009, it was at a time when Leslie wanted a place to live with more opportunity for activities. They were living

in Westgate-On-Sea at the time. Leslie made the decision to move to Eastry House and Ted decided to stay where he was. Leslie said at the time: "it was a hard decision to leave my friend, but I am bored and want to do more with my life".

The staff at Eastry House supported Leslie to keep in touch with Ted and would arrange for Leslie to visit Ted regularly, so over the next nine years the friendship continued to grow. They never missed a birthday or Christmas, Easter or many times in between.

It was to our surprise and delight when this summer we received a referral for Ted from his Care Manager. We didn't tell Leslie at first in case things didn't work out, but when the placement was agreed we were able to reunite the two old friends and move Ted in.

Their reaction in this photo says it all!



Summer BBQ

Summer seems like a lifetime ago already as the dark nights draw in. But we wanted to share some photos taken at our summer BBQ with tenants and their families, plus staff from the local London services and central office. Everyone had a really great time and all the people we support helped with the BBQ and made delicious food for everyone to enjoy.



Happy birthday!

Recently, one of the people we support celebrated his birthday with his mum, friends and staff. He helped to decorate the house and cooked the food. They enjoyed every bit of it, and Mum sends a big thank you to everyone for the lovely birthday treat for her son.



New web page

Our new Enhanced Supported Living services in London now have their own webpage on the Optima Care site. To find out more, go to www.optimacare.co.uk/location/london



Communication matters

Optima Care & Health Education England promote the benefits of having a standardised communication system in the social care sector

There is currently no formal, standardised communication system in place in the Learning Disability care sector. This needs to change as it leads to problems for everyone: for the people we support; their families; and our staff. An inability to communicate leads to immense frustration and this can be exhibited through challenging behaviour, including self-harming and / or aggression towards others.

Without a standardised system, individuals come to us perhaps knowing how to use objects of reference, sign language and Makaton, or Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS). That's if they come from a special needs school that teaches such skills, and even then such skills often become lost upon transition from school due to poor liaison between schools and health and social care services.

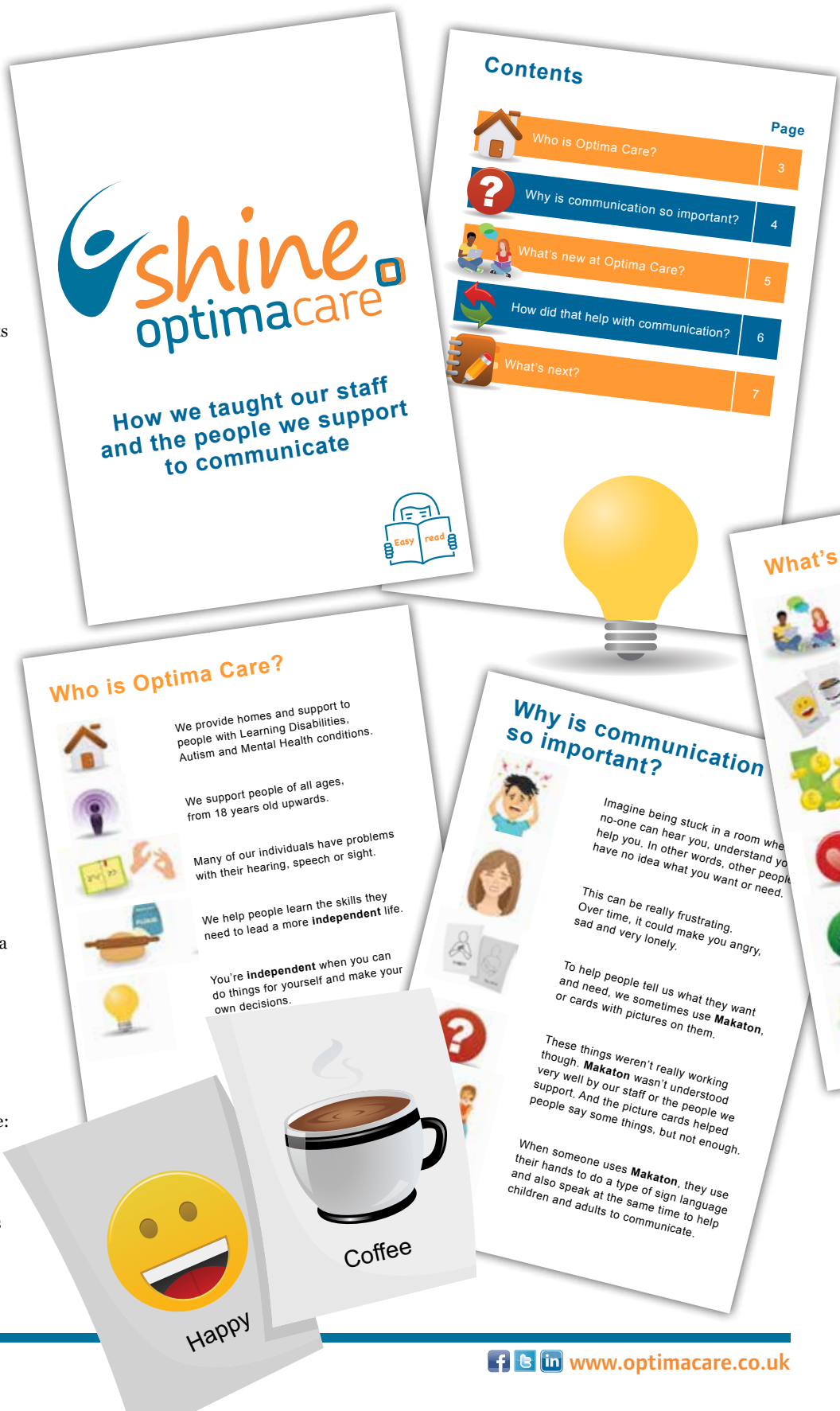
When individuals come to us from a community residential service, they might not have any of these skills at all.

That's why we applied to Health Education England (HEE) for the funding that would allow us to train a number of members of staff in the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), followed by the implementation of a pilot scheme in our young adult transition service at Gate House.

The outcomes were more than we thought possible. PECS brought big benefits to the people we support who could now clearly communicate, first time around, what they wanted and needed. This led to improved relationships with their families and staff and a marked reduction in challenging behaviour.

For staff too, it made a positive difference. They reported they hadn't just learnt a new communication system, rather the change brought about by this experience had shifted the whole culture and ethos of the service much further towards where they wanted to be: enabling better person-centred care.

The outcomes of the pilot scheme are now available in both a full report and easy read version, designed to help evidence the benefits within the health and social care sector of having a standard and sustainable model of communication in place.



Communication is physical & verbal

This year, two new young people move into Eastry Villas, both of them on the Autistic Spectrum with complex needs. One is very sensory-led and does not like physical contact, unless it's on his terms. He doesn't even like people to be in close proximity. In his previous placement, a haircut was only achieved with four people helping: two to hold; one to do the haircut; one to feed gummy bears constantly.

Thanks to positive behavioural support, we achieved a haircut with three staff: one to cut; one to feed gummy bears every now and again when directed by the third staff member who was undertaking intensive interaction and deep pressure massage. This was actually carried out in the company van. Being sensory-led, sitting in the van is actually a pleasurable and meaningful activity for this particular individual. We parked the van in the grounds and left the engine running to achieve this goal.

I know that this does not appear to be an amazing outcome. But in this person's world - and his parents and care managers' world - this represents an outstanding outcome for this individual as this has never been achieved in the past without hands on and much distress on his part.

He didn't become distressed once throughout the haircut in this instance - we only had happy noises and facial expressions.

What's next?



Our **Training Manager** is going to work with the staff who've learnt PECS to design a programme to teach more of our staff how to use it.



This means we'll be able to help even more of the people we support to communicate.



We're really grateful to Health Education England for giving us the help we needed to support our people to lead more independent lives.

How did that help with communication?



Our staff learnt how to help some of the people we support to communicate using PECS.



Now they could tell us what they needed and wanted and also how they felt. It made everyone happier and not lonely anymore.



We also taught their families how to use PECS so they could communicate much better with their sons and daughters. This also made them happy.



By using PECS we're helping the people we support to become more independent. We're also helping to bring families and friends together.

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New at Optima Care?

We wanted to send some of our staff on a course to learn more about the **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**. We heard it was really good but the course was quite expensive.

PECS helps people who can't speak to communicate using pictures.

We heard that **Health Education England** could help health and care providers like Optima pay for staff training, if it also helped the people we support.

Health Education England helps people access to great healthcare by ensuring that staff who support them are caring, understanding and able to make a difference.

We told Health Education England all we wanted our staff to learn more about. And they said "Yes!".

We received funding for some of our staff the training they needed to be able to communicate better with the people we support.



The training is 'done'

BY CHRISTINA HARRISON, TRAINING MANAGER

So, you've done all your training. You've got your Care Certificate and attended all the mandatory training etc. Is that it?

Well, no – of course not. I think we all know here are many subjects that we need to revisit: some are to be refreshed every year and some, every three years. Some of the subjects are specialist, the courses for which only need to be attended once in your work lifetime.

In Social Care, there are so many subjects that necessitate training. For example, Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act (MCA) & Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), Infection Control, Person Centred Care...the list goes on.

And then there's the Health and Safety training, Fire Awareness, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), Manual Handling, First Aid, Food Hygiene Awareness.

These all represent mandatory legal requirements. So, between CQC and the LAW it can be pretty time consuming. And - let's not beat about the bush - expensive for Optima Care.

Don't forget all the specialisms like Epilepsy Awareness, Diabetes Awareness, Learning Disability, Autism and Asperger's Awareness and there are so many more that you will need in order to do your job well.

What's more, if you want to do any specific training that relates to your job role - which could give you the knowledge to enhance your role - please don't forget to ask your Manager.

When should you be able to say: "Training is done"?

Well, actually, if we want to continue to be effective, meet the standards and, more importantly, care about what we do, the answer is "NEVER!"

We all need our skills polished regularly so that we can SHINE and help the people we support to SHINE.

Can you all remember when you last had your mandatory training or how many times you've attended training in the past year? There should be a record of that somewhere, do you know where it is?

Of course, we have Christmas coming up and that is usually a time when training is the last thing we want to think about because we have so many other things on our minds. So, I would like to think we can start again in the New Year with a clean slate.

If you would like to know what training you need and when it is due, please don't hesitate to give me a call or email me at christina.harrison@optimacare.co.uk and I will be more than happy to enlighten you. I look forward to seeing you at the next session.



AUTHOR ISAAC ASIMOV IS QUOTED AS SAYING:

"The day you stop learning is the day you begin decaying"

Helping everyone SHINE!

We have our Workplace Values on our website and in each service but I wonder how many of our staff are able to talk with confidence about our SHINE values - for both staff and the people we support. We want to ensure that our values are lived, breathed and supported in our services. So, in the New Year, we're going to be asking you for your thoughts on the current values, what we need to do to ensure they're relevant to everyone, and / or what we need to change. Watch this space!

