

OUR community

NEWS

Eddie's Quarterly Round-up

Budding artists

Turner Contemporary provided a very memorable day for three of the people that Optima Care supports. The gallery not only judged the organisation's Spring art competition but also presented winners' certificates to the top three:



1st place, Eileen Parsons, Eastry Villas; 2nd place, Josie Calnan, Heron House; 3rd place, Mark Whitehead, Eastry Villas. All our runners-up received 'Highly Commended' certificates from Turner Contemporary.

Breaking News!

Josie recently attended an interview at Canterbury College to do an art course and took along her Turner certificate along. Unfortunately the course won't run this year due to a shortage of applicants but she's considering an Access course instead.

Staff survey

The results of our first staff survey are in - please turn to page 7 for more information. We'll be liaising with the Staff Consultative Committee on the findings and looking at ways to improve response rates in future with an anonymous electronic version under consideration.

Partnership working

Our latest partnership working forum brought together commissioners, providers, community, crisis and forensic teams across the South East to hear a talk on 'Legal Frameworks and the Secure Pathway' by Belinda Schwehr, Legal & Training Consultant, Care and Health Law. Thanks to these forums we have also now provided placements in our services to three local police trainees.

Transforming Care

Optima Care has detailed the way in which we can support the national Transforming Care agenda. As Chair of the LD Provider Working Party for Care England I'm currently helping - along with other providers - to progress this national government initiative, helping individuals move out of secure settings and into the community, improving their quality of life - including enabling their families and loved ones to be much more involved - and reducing the cost of care to Local Authorities. For more information, go to <http://www.optimacare.co.uk/shine/shine-secure-care>



Eddie Coombes, CEO

New transition service

WE ENJOYED a fantastic response to our recent Open Day to launch our new young person transition service. Our specialist residential provision for 16-25 year olds starts with a thorough assessment of needs and follows with the design of a goal-driven, person-centred

pathway in line with an individual's Education, Health & Care (EHC) plan. It is designed and managed by senior individuals with a wealth of experience in children's and adults services: Julian Finnis and Joanne Neiles. For more information, email Julian.finnis@optimacare.co.uk



Making a difference

A HUGE congratulations to the Spenser Road team - the most recent winners of our 'Making a Difference' initiative. The team was nominated by one of the people we support - Ben Hunt - in recognition of the fact that they surprised him for his recent 29th birthday by turning up announced at the local Weatherspoons to help him celebrate.

Ben asked manager Kerry Crane to submit an entry to the Making A Difference initiative on his behalf. She wrote: "Ben said he had such a great evening and was so happy so many of the staff came to his meal. He said he can't wait for his 30th next year!!"

The team are looking forward to putting their £100 winnings towards a night out.

STAFF COMPETITION! TURN TO PAGE 8 >>

This page is dedicated to the creativity and initiative of one of the people we support at Eastry House, 73-year-old Leslie Fuller, together with the care and support of the staff team around him.

Happy 90th to the Queen!

Leslie was recently asked to write a poem for the Eastry parish magazine in commemoration of the Queen's 90th birthday:



Leslie receives a special thank you

Leslie was presented with a special trophy from Eastry Twinning Association as a thank you for all the hard work he invested in designing and making a Remembrance Day tapestry.

The tapestry shows the poppy and the cornflower, which is the French symbol of remembrance. It was presented by Leslie, on behalf of the Twinning Association, to Eastry Church during a special service.

He met the Twinning Association representatives who came over for the service. Teresa Lane from Eastry Day Centre attended the service with Leslie and commented: "They were thrilled with his tapestry and I have been told by people who went over on French Armistice Day that his work was placed in front of the altar in the church at Longpre les Corps Saints."

The Queen

*Happy Birthday to our Queen,
she's 90 years young and elegant
when seen.*

*She wears a crown, which
sparkles all around.*

*Her hair has curls, which match
the colour of her pearls.*

*She goes in a golden carriage
when there is a marriage.*

*She has a throne made of
gold and stone.*

*The Queen is very special.
She wears a golden crown.*

*She sits in a horse-drawn
carriage and drives around
London town.*

*This is my poem, happy birthday
your Majesty.*



Supported Living update

We have had a superb response to our Supported Living service in Herne Bay so far and currently have just a couple more vacancies. We have taken the decision to put a hold on all new referrals and assessments until further notice. This is because we have a new client group – many of whom are youngsters with complex needs who have never lived away from home before – and we also have a new staff team. Our

priority is to ensure that everyone is settled into their environment before developing the next phase.

Well done Chalice

A huge well done from everyone to Chalice Edmeades, Herne Bay Supported Living, for completing her Apprenticeship Award for her Health & Social Care Level 2. A fantastic effort and well deserved.

HAPPY FAMILIES

“It was a great relief to have your email and to know the move was a success. It’s an exciting, but anxious time. I really appreciate all the efforts you and all the staff involved are making to ensure XXX loves his new home.”

Email from a parent, following the transition of her son from Optima Care residential to Supported Living

A warm welcome to new staff

In June we’ll be giving a warm welcome to a group of 10 new members of staff who are joining us all the way from Bucharest, Romania. All English-speakers, they bring with them a wealth of health and care experience – from personal/family care experience to qualified psychologists and social workers. Many of the individuals already have the

Italian or Romanian equivalent to the NVQ Health & Social Care.

The group will primarily help support our fast-growing Supported Living service helping us to eliminate the use of agency staff, in addition to providing Bank support across our other services.

Optima Care is currently helping our new staff team source appropriate local accommodation.

Chief Operating Officer Richard McKenzie said: “I’m sure you’ll all join me in welcoming our new members of staff and providing them with the help and support to settle into their new community.”



Community news: In brief

Spring art

Eileen Parsons and Mark Whitehead, both from Eastry Villas, enjoyed creating their artwork for our Spring art competition, judged by Turner Contemporary in Margate. See the winners’ photo on the front page of this newsletter.



Eileen Parsons, Eastry Villas



Mark Whitehead, Eastry Villas

Halloween?!

Our last full 8-page newsletter was published just before Halloween...but we felt that these photos from the Day Centre’s Halloween party were so good we couldn’t miss printing them – belated or not!



Care Certificate success!

Seahaven recently saw 10 members of staff receiving their Care Certificates during a presentation by Chief Operating Officer Richard McKenzie. This closely follows a series of similarly successful outcomes for staff across our other services too.

Training Lead Christina Harrison commented: "This is a phenomenal result! I'm really proud of all of them – and everyone who has completed the Care

Certificate theory since our programme began. It's not always an easy task alongside the demands of work and life."

The full induction training programme, which includes everything from manual handling and health & safety to food & nutrition and care plans – plus help and support in completing the Care Certificate theory - was designed and introduced last year by Christina and has proven hugely popular and successful. All new members of staff are invited to attend an induction-training course at our service centre in Manston, ideally before they start at their setting – failing that, within a couple of weeks' maximum.

Christina's next challenge is to focus on supervision and appraisal training in line with Optima's Shine model and workplace values (see circular image, left).



"I'm happy to report that the numbers of bums on seats are getting bigger which makes any training so much more effective. So, if you are asked to attend training please do come along and help to not only learn something but also put your views across."



CHRISTINA



Victoria Robinson, Seahaven



Seahaven team celebrate their success!
L-R: Megan Wright, Martin Griffiths, Richard McKenzie, Christina Harrison, Sharon Head, Victoria Robinson, Lynda Heath



Megan Wright, Seahaven



Caron Smith, Eastry House



Gary Bushell, Heron House



Lynda Heath, Seahaven



Lauren Preece, Eastry House

Optima granted PECS funding



Following a successful application by HR Manager Nikki Kerry to Health Education England, Kent, Sussex & Surrey (HEE KSS) Optima Care was awarded funding to offer Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) training to 20 members of staff.

PECS is commonly used as a communication aid for children with autism, but it can also be used for a wide variety of learners from preschoolers to adults who have various communicative, cognitive and physical impairments.

We asked staff to enter their interest if they would like to benefit from the 2-day training course, which takes place in June, and 20 candidates were subsequently selected. A few months after the training, each 'trainee' will present a case study to show the way in which they have applied their PECS knowledge in the support of clients.

Training news: In brief

Clinical governance

Community Living Director Denise Banks is currently providing support to service managers in implementing Optima Care's clinical governance cycle. This is essentially a framework for ensuring the continual improvement of our services and safeguarding high standards of care.



Cookery School

After the initial success of the Cookery School at The Chilterns, programme design and implementer (& Chilterns Support Worker) Tammy Stephens is now gearing up for a Level 2 programme.

This fantastic initiative includes tailored programmes according to the level of support required by individuals. It complements The Chilterns' Healthy Eating Group, which works in partnership with NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to promote healthy choices and lifestyles.



Tammy Stephens

Community news: In brief

Seahaven: London day out

Staff and the people we support at Seahaven enjoyed a day out in London recently, visiting the Sea Life Centre and taking in the sights during an open top bus tour.



Tai Chi @ The Chilterns

The Chilterns is now hosting a weekly Tai Chi class for the people we support and the response so far from class attendees has been really positive.

The class was designed and organised by staff members Jordan Cowburn and Jake Reading with the help of Clinical Psychologist Dr Heleen Malherbe.

The benefits of Tai Chi include:

- General increase in quality of life
- Can reduce stress
- Improves balance and general mobility (even

for over 65s, severely obese and those with ankle, hip and knee concerns)

- Increases muscle strength in legs
- Beneficial for those with osteoporosis and arthritis
- All ages can do it
- No fitness required – even wheelchair users can benefit
- Essentially, a gentle activity that is unlikely to cause injury if done correctly. The exercises involve lots of flowing, easy movements that don't stress the joints or muscles.



Police trainees

As part of our community collaboration initiatives, we're now offering placements in our services to local police officer trainees. Our first trainee, PC Tristan Foster, on placement at The Chilterns, commented: "My perceptions around both mental ill health and offenders have been

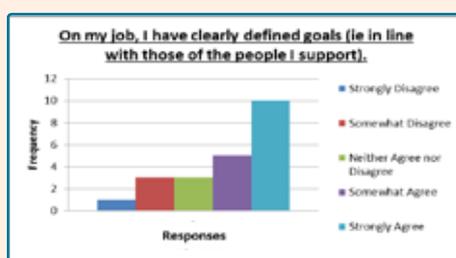
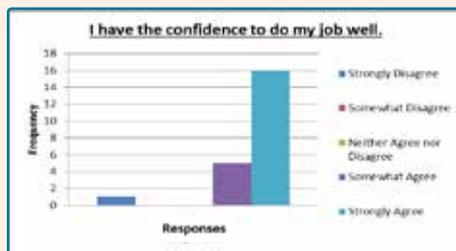
challenged by my experiences at The Chilterns. I feel that I have really benefitted from my placement...". And of the staff: "I was impressed by the knowledge and compassion displayed." We've subsequently welcomed another trainee to The Chilterns and also at Herne Bay Supported Living.

Let's talk about... the staff survey results

Responses to our first biannual staff survey provide some very useful insights into the way in which the company assists you – or not, as the case may be. It is through this kind of work that we can learn about what's working for you and what's impeding your ability to do a good job. In other words, it's vital.

The first questionnaire was sent out in paper format alongside payslips towards the end of last year and results collated and shared with the management team and Staff Consultative Committee (SCC), with a view to discussing and looking at ways to address areas of concern.

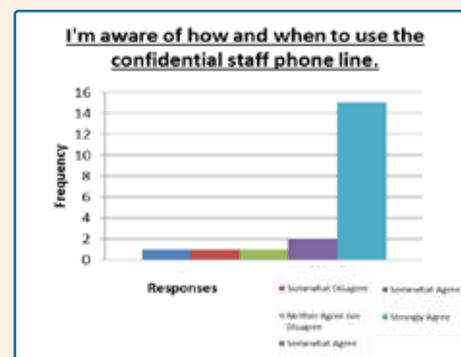
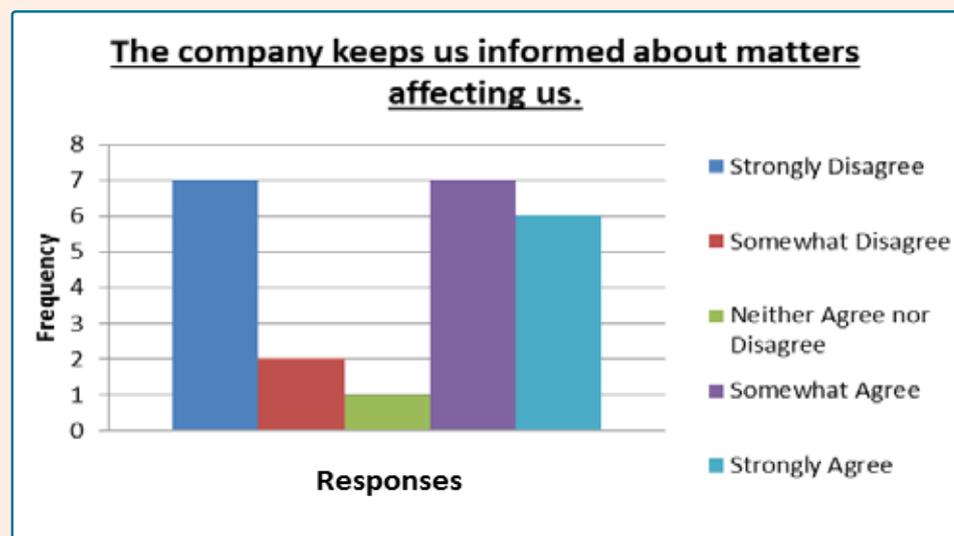
The biggest area of concern – and, equally, of disparity - highlighted by respondents



to the survey, was that 30% 'Strongly Disagree' and 30% 'Somewhat Agree' with the statement: 'The company keeps us informed about matters affecting us'. Clearly, different settings have different experiences.

We aim to ensure consistent communication to all via the following means: this quarterly newsletter; occasional staff memos with payslips; updates provided to managers via monthly Operations meetings and via email updates, for managers to pass on to staff.

Moreover, we have the SCC, which meets every two months in Manston and is meant to include volunteer representatives from each setting. However, representation could do with a boost! Some settings are not currently represented (please refer to the box below, which is calling for volunteers). The SCC presents an ideal opportunity to have a say – on anything from equality and diversity, company policies and strategies, to providing feedback from colleagues and raising any issues on behalf of individuals and teams.



Online & anonymous

The actual number of responses to the staff survey was lower than we had hoped. So we are currently looking into other ways of distributing the survey to ensure a higher response rate. A free online tool called Survey Monkey is being considered for the next survey. This can be completed electronically – via a PC or Smartphone – and, more importantly, it's completely anonymous. Watch out for more info, alongside your payslips, in due course.

Staff Consultative Committee (SCC) – calling for volunteers!

Representation on the SCC is getting a little low. We're looking for volunteer representatives from each setting to come along to the Manston service centre and meet with peers from other settings every couple of months. It's an ideal opportunity to make your voice heard and the voices of your colleagues.

We discuss things like the staff survey and look at ways to make improvements for all. One thing that HR Manager Nikki Kerry is keen to discuss at a future meeting is the idea of a regular staff lottery, the funds from which could be used for a variety of community initiatives that would benefit staff and the people we support, such as the Staff Care Award. The SCC would provide the steer on how such a fund would be used.

To find out more and / or volunteer, please email nikki.kerry@optimacare.co.uk



Growing Support Gardening Challenge

Growing Support is working with National Care Home Open Day to invite people to enter the first ever Growing Support Gardening Challenge on June 17th 2016.

The aim is to enable more people living in care than ever before to be active in the garden. The Growing Support Gardening Challenge isn't about great gardens – it's about great people. The goal is to celebrate the fantastic achievements of clients and staff.



The organisers hope that everyone taking part in Care Home Open Day will turn their garden into a lively hub of community activity and tell them all about it. You can win great prizes and publicise your achievements by entering any one of four categories.

Don't worry if you don't have green fingers or a big garden (or any garden!) – the following website includes lots of easy and creative ideas so that anyone can take part: <http://growing-support.co.uk/gardening-challenge/>

Not a lot of people know that...

*Karen Hopkins
(nee Fox)
Accounts
Manager
...recently
got married!*



*Congratulations
Karen from everyone
at Optima Care.*



Karen: "Following a surprise proposal on Christmas Day, 2014, we just decided early this year that we should plump for a date. So, in February, the wedding planning began. We gave ourselves just three months to get things sorted!

The big day was planned for 29th April, partly because it's my birthday that week so I had the week off anyway but mainly because we had to fit in around my son's dissertation!

He's studying History at Southampton Uni and had a deadline of 28th April to hand in his final dissertation. This was shortly to be followed by his various holiday plans and then graduation. Basically, the wedding was all planned around him!

We tied the knot at Ramsgate Registry Office and then a wedding reception at our local Italian restaurant. It was a really small and intimate wedding - just family and two sets of close friends.

I just want to say a big thank you for the champagne and voucher you gave myself and Phil for our wedding. It was very kind and much appreciated. Plus the card, which was a great thing to open at our wedding reception and which the best man attempted to read out!"

WIN

Competition! £100 prize

We've now seen two winners of this quarterly competition since launching late last year:

- Phill Brown for taking the initiative to teach practical maintenance skills to Sol at Kingsdown Lodge;
- The Spenser Road team - nominated by Ben Hunt, one of the people they support at the setting, for giving him a birthday to remember.

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 by 15th July 2016. The winner will be notified by 22nd July 2016 and will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.