

# ourcommunity

NEWS

## Eddie's Quarterly Round-up



### Family Survey

The results of our annual Family Survey are in and we're very happy to announce that the vast majority of families agree that we are meeting our key objectives. Please turn to page 4 for more information.

### Making a difference

We have two worthy winners of our Making a Difference initiative this time, to make up for the fact that an edition of the newsletter was missed over the summer due to holidays. It's great to see both a manager and a parent of one of the people we support nominating staff members. See page 5 for the winners and how to enter.

### Driving up quality

We've signed up to the Driving Up Quality Code. In doing so, we're making a commitment to drive up quality in services for people with learning disabilities. This initiative will be led by our Consultant Clinical Psychologist Dr Heleen Malherbe and Clinical Psychologist Dr Claire Blincoe, who will work in partnership with managers across all our services. <https://www.drivingupquality.org.uk/home>

### Supported living

Following a disappointing inspection report, we can confirm that we are progressing quickly with our action plan with a target to have all improvements evidenced by the end of the year. Our recently recruited Registered Manager Angela and her staff team are doing a fantastic job in this regard. Learn about one staff member's experience of supported living on page 8.



Eddie Coombes, Chief Executive

## Talking Transition

DEPUTY MANAGER of our Young Adult Transition Service Jo Neiles was recently asked to take part in a video commissioned by East Kent Mancap and Forelands School to help promote the benefits of transition services.

One of the people we support Theo also appeared in the video,

along with his mum who spoke about the benefits to her son's health, confidence and self-esteem since he came to live at Optima Care's Heron House at the age of 18.

We'll be including a link to the video from our website as soon as it becomes available.



Jo Neiles  
Optima Care  
Ph: 01843 822508

## Recruiting now

OUR NEW Transition service at Gate House enjoyed a full refurbishment this year. We've been assessing potential clients over the past few months and are now almost full and on the lookout for Transition Team Leaders and workers.

Full induction and ongoing training offered, plus flexible working patterns. For more information, please contact: Julian Finnis (Registered Manager) – [julian.finnis@optimacare.co.uk](mailto:julian.finnis@optimacare.co.uk) or Jo Neiles (Deputy Manager) – [joanne.neiles@optimacare.co.uk](mailto:joanne.neiles@optimacare.co.uk) on 01304 619976 / 01304 620177.

joanne.neiles@optimacare.co.uk or call 01843 822508 for an informal chat.' The poster also includes social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and a website link [www.optimacare.co.uk](http://www.optimacare.co.uk)." data-bbox="701 681 947 939"/>

# Warm welcomes & pastures new



Richard McKenzie

## Richard McKenzie

Optima Care's COO Richard McKenzie announced that he would be leaving Optima Care's Kent operation by November. Richard commented: "This is for personal reasons – primarily a need to relocate from my current home in London to another part of the country. I'll be spending some time with the new Operations Director before I leave, introducing him to the team and doing a handover. It's been a pleasure working with everyone at Optima Care."

Eddie Coombes, Optima Care's CEO, added: "Richard has played a pivotal role in the restructure of the business over the last couple of years. He's a popular member of the team and I'm sure everyone will join me in thanking him for his support and wishing him all the best for the future."

## Matthew Jones

Matthew (Matt) Jones will be taking over as Operations Director. He joined the organisation



in October, initially working alongside Richard – getting to know the managers and staff and also the local commissioners.

Matt has a wide range of

operational experience in both adult and children's services. His most recent role was Partnerships and Service Development Manager at The Hesley Group – a private provider of specialist residential services and schools for young people and adults – often with autism – who have a learning disability and complex needs.

Prior to that he was Assistant Director at The West London Alliance (WLA), responsible for creating the WLA adult and children's social care efficiency programme, to manage the care market and deliver joint commissioning and procurement projects.

Eddie said: "Matt's skills and experience represent an ideal fit and I'm sure he'll prove a great asset to the team. He's keen to ensure visibility and hands-on day-to-day support across our services."

## Angela Rankin

We recently welcomed Angela Rankin to the team as Registered Manager of Herne Bay Supported Living. Angela brings with her over 30 years' care sector experience.



In her most recent role she was a Registered Care Services Manager and Deputy CEO for a housing association based in Hertfordshire, overseeing Residential, Outreach and Supported Living services.

Her previous roles have also included being the Registered Manager of residential homes for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities, and also Deputy Home Care Manager, running the agency on a daily basis and ensuring the right support at the right time.

Eddie commented: "I'm delighted that Angela has joined the team. She has a wealth of relevant experience."

## Raj Dupati

Raj joined Optima Care in November as Finance Controller. He joins us with 11 years' experience in healthcare, his most recent role being a Financial Analyst at Care UK. Raj is a Chartered Accountant holding both a Masters in IT and MBA in Accounting and Finance.

In addition to taking on the Finance Controller role, Raj will also take day-to-day responsibility for IT.

Eddie commented: "Please join me in welcoming Raj. Feel free to contact him as needed. He has a responsibility to support and train our managers when required and he is keen to help."

## Denise Banks

After taking on an Area Manager role earlier this year, Denise has now moved back to her previous role as Registered Manager at The Chilterns, Optima Care's Forensic service. This move was necessitated by various failings on the part of the Acting Manager, which were identified by Denise during supervisions. The Acting Manager has subsequently resigned.



Denise Banks



# Update from our Training Lead Christina

## Overseas Recruits

At the beginning of August 2016 we started to see the arrival of our new carers from overseas and to date we have successfully welcomed 8 new people in to our teams from Romania and Italy, the majority going in to Supported Living and one to Spenser Road in Herne Bay.

A big thank-you to our new recruits for taking this opportunity to come half-way around the world in to an unknown environment and taking a chance on us.



## Training

Mandatory training continues on a weekly basis, the usual subjects such as H&S, fire awareness, infection control, safeguarding, MCA and DoLS, to name but a few.

We have also recently delivered training on rectal Diazepam, Autism & Aspergers, Learning Disability and Substance Misuse at which we have had really good attendance.

So, thank you to all of you for making the time to come to the training.

As you are aware we have two good venues now for training, one at Eastry Day Centre and the other at Manston. Please make sure you check the venue of the training before setting out.

Anyone can contact me about any aspect of training on 07824 905 008 or by email at christina.harrison@optimacare.co.uk. If you have a query about any aspect of training please get in touch.



>> Turn to page 8 to read one of our new recruit's views on supported living.

## Staff enjoy PECS training

This summer, 20 members of staff enjoyed a 2-day course in the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and are now implementing what they have learnt in our services and will be helping to mentor others in due course.

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 the PECS training to 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.

Laura Hancock, Team Leader at Herne Bay Supported Living, attended the course and

commented: "I already help mentor staff in the use of pictures with the people we support. It was a really good course and I can definitely see the benefits of PECS if used alongside other pictorial systems for those clients who perhaps haven't experienced PECS for some time since leaving school."

We asked staff to enter their interest if they would like to benefit from the training course and 20 candidates were subsequently selected. Following the training, each 'trainee' will now complete a case study to show the way in which they have applied their PECS knowledge in the support of clients. This will be presented back to the group in due course.

# Our families have spoken

**A**lthough this year's results are strong and show that the majority of families agree that we are meeting our objectives, it's notable that the overall percentage in agreement has slightly lowered this year.

That said, against a backdrop of unprecedented pressures in the social care sector, it's a huge credit to our staff that these results have been achieved. Our staff have a reason to be proud of all their hard work and, moreover, the obvious dignity and respect they are demonstrating to the people we support and their families.

Overall, 87% of the families of the people we support agree (with the majority – 59% – agreeing strongly) that our services are safe and provide good outcomes.

85% also agree (of those, 53% 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.

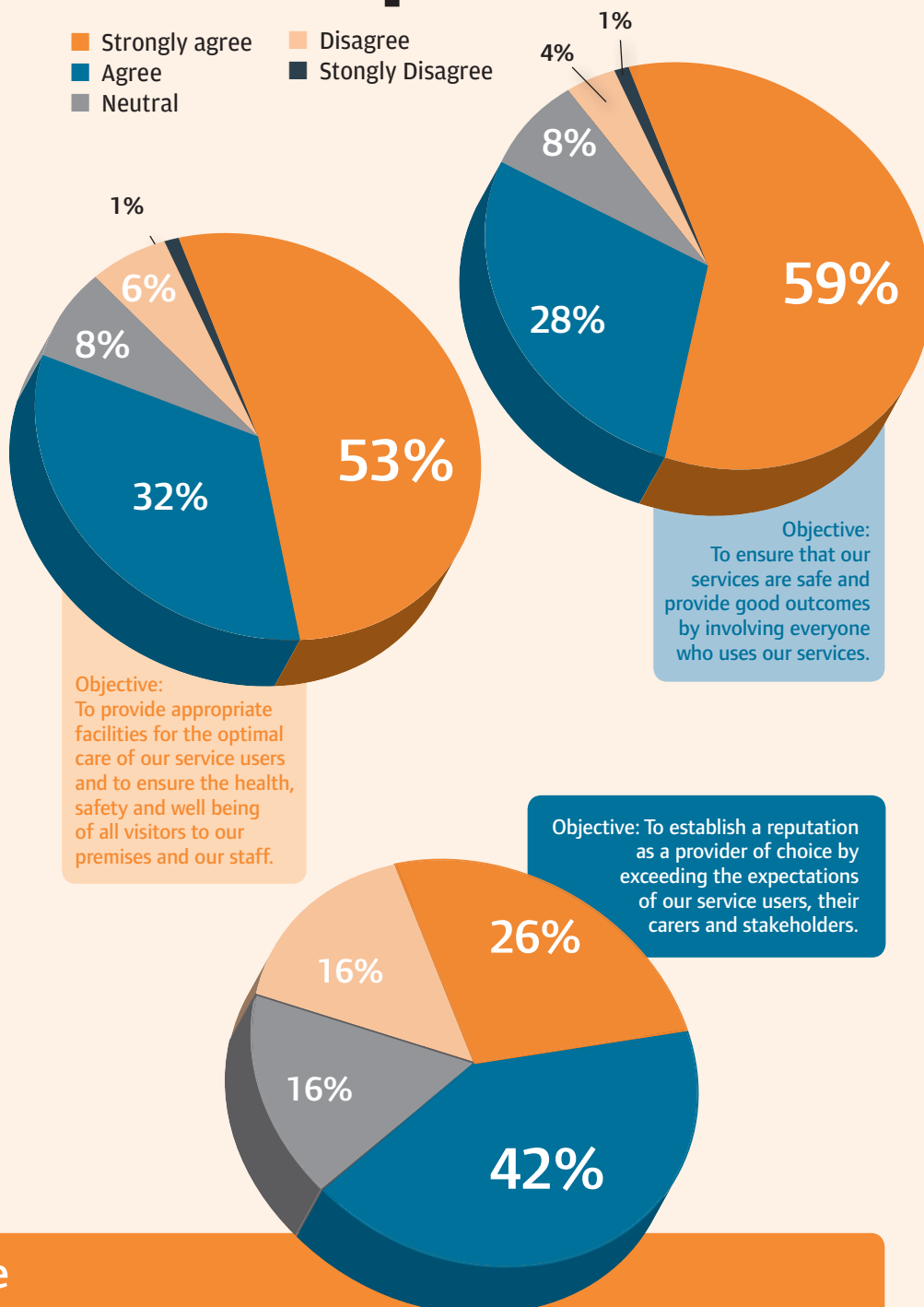
Finally, two thirds of our families (68%) agree that we are exceeding the expectations of the people we support, their carers and loved ones.

## What do we do with these results?

Along with regular feedback from our Managers and Staff Consultative Committee (SCC), plus the annual Staff Survey, we try to gain a full picture of where things are working and where they aren't so that we can both address problems and build upon successes.

The results from the Family Survey will now be discussed with Managers and the SCC so that we can look at ways of working together to better achieve our goals.

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree



## The current landscape

The social care landscape is changing beyond recognition – the launch of integrated health and social care, the rollout of supported living and reduction of residential care, the requirement for age appropriate transition services for youngsters, the need to ensure that more people leave in-patient (mainly secure) care and have access to care in the community – all of these things are ensuring that providers such as Optima Care are having to change their way of working to survive.

On top of all of this is the funding crisis facing the sector: since 2010, cuts in council-funded social care have totaled £4.6bn. And these budgets were cut by a further £500m this year. A news report published in The Guardian stated that if the growth in the numbers of older and disabled people is taken into account, an additional £1.1bn will be needed just to provide the same level of service as last year. Obviously that extra cash is not going to come from central Government.

All of this helps illustrate the challenge we face and the reason that we have been restructuring our services over the last 18 – 24 months.

# Going the extra mile matters

**W**e have the absolute pleasure of giving out two awards! This is to make up for the fact that we missed an edition of the newsletter (and therefore an award) in the summer.

A huge well done goes out to Claire Baker

from Gate House and also Kim Foster at Spenser Road. They have both gone the extra mile for the people we support, as recognised by their nominees.

Here are excerpts from the nominations we received:

## Nomination for Claire Baker by her manager Jo Neiles



"I would like to nominate Claire Baker - she has been a part of DB's core team and after working very closely and building up a good relationship with DB, she has managed to get her to the hairdressers. It took several weeks and a lot of time and effort - using strategies of desensitisation and communication to ensure the visit was a positive one.

"Now Claire supports DB regularly and I am sure this has only been achieved because Claire was so focused on making it happen."

## Nomination for Kim Foster by a parent of one of the people we support

"I would like to nominate Kim Foster at Spenser Road please. Not only does she regularly go the extra mile for my daughter and clearly she adores being with her, but last year Kim brought her to her brother's wedding.



"It was a very hot day and in Kim's care both my daughter and I were able to enjoy the wedding. Kim took care of my daughter's needs all day which enabled her to have fun with her family and for me to focus a bit more on the groom on his big day.

"It made all the difference with Kim being there and clearly demonstrated her dedication."

**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 by Friday 20th January 2017. The winner will be notified by 3rd February 2017 and will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



## The Chilterns & Eastry House news: In brief

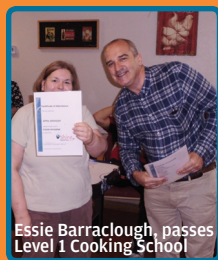


### Photography group

A photography group was set up over the summer, with the first session held at Reculver Towers. The group went on a 4.5 mile wildlife walk, identifying flowers along the way and taking photos. Each week, the group visit different places of interest to take photos whilst also learning new things and enjoying nature.

### Flying colours

A number of the people we support at The Chilterns were recently awarded their Level 1 Cooking certificates and passes in Food Hygiene, after following the courses set out by Tammy, Jordan and Jake. COO Richard McKenzie awarded the certificates during a presentation ceremony.



Essie Barraclough, passes Level 1 Cooking School



Paul Christofi, passed Level 1 Cooking School



Eddie Hills, passed Food Hygiene course

# Fundraising for neo natal care

**E**astry House's fundraising has this year focused mainly on the neo natal care unit at William Harvey hospital, Ashford in support of the remarkable work they do there for premature babies.

The team chose to support this cause as one of the members of staff Chloe had her son Alfie at 27 weeks gestation. He was born on 22nd April weighing just 1lb 10 ounces.

During his time in the neo natal unit Alfie developed an infection and had to have surgery on his bowel. He was transferred to

Brighton special baby unit for this and he weighed only 2lb 3 ounces at the time.

A further operation was required before he was discharged back to Ashford Hospital on 3rd August.

Alfie was finally discharged home on 17th August after 117 days in neo natal care. He is now settled and doing well and weighs a healthy 8lb 6 ounces.

The team decided, with the support from friends and family, to fundraise for the neo natal unit and to date has raised £465. Further fundraising events are still planned.



## Stars in our eyes

**T**he Chilterns' manager Denise Banks nominated three members of staff for this year's Kent Learning Disability Partnership Awards in the 'Helping people stay healthy award' category. Although we didn't win this time, we wanted to highlight the outstanding work of this trio as, regardless of the awards result, they're all stars in our eyes.

Many of the people we support at The Chilterns are on anti-psychotic medication, one of the recognised side effects of which is weight gain. In an effort to help address this issue, Tammy, Jordan and Jake have worked together to introduce a number of complementary

initiatives that are helping to deliver positive outcomes: these include a cookery school, food hygiene course, Food Champion / healthy eating programme, Tai Chi classes, weekly walking group and participation in sporting activities and events.

This programme is not only helping to bring lasting and positive results in terms of independent health benefits but also improving life skills in terms of planning, budgeting and the ability to make healthy lifestyle choices.

To read the full awards entry, please go to <http://www.optimacare.co.uk/latest-news>

# Goodbye Terry

Sadly on 10th June 2016 we lost our beloved Terry Guyett, following a short illness. Terry had been with us at Seahaven since 1993 and was loved by all. Terry's family so strongly believed Seahaven was his home that they asked for the service and celebration of his life to held at the setting.

Alongside his long-time keyworker, Laura worked hard to give Terry the perfect send-off filled with pictures, videos, memories and his favourite foods. The theme of the day was blue and yellow. These colours were reflected in the clothes that we wore and the balloons that were released by family, friends he lived with at Seahaven and the staff.

The cremation was held at Braham, where his brother Jimmy's service was held. Jimmy had previously lived with Terry at Seahaven.

Terry will forever be remembered. We have a rose bush given to us by his sister Anne, which has been decorated with stones painted by the friends he lived with, and a memorial bench from his sister Daphnie and brother-in-law Peter who remain in contact with staff at Seahaven. Their support and kindness will not be forgotten.

We look forward to them attending Seahaven's 1st staff wedding between Laura Smith and Anthony McCluskey in 2017.

Sharon Head, Manager, Seahaven



## Seaheaven news: In brief

### ■ Moving on up

Congratulations to Anthony McCluskey from Seahaven for his recent promotion to a senior post. Anthony joined the team 2 years ago, and has worked hard during this time, developing his skills and knowledge and demonstrating his ability to lead a team. We all wish him well in his new role.

### ■ Local celebrity

Clive Elworthy from Seahaven has become quite the celebrity at Deal's Costa coffee shop in town. Clive loves his Costa coffee and visits the shop almost every day. He is so well known and liked by the staff team there, that they recently had his own Costa badge made for him with his name on it. Needless to say Clive was thrilled and wears it on his coat each day with pride.



### ■ Studies pay off

Well done to Kylie McGarvey, Kyle Thacker and Millie Cory from Seahaven who have all recently successfully completed their NVQs. Kylie completed level five and Kyle and Millie completed level three. All worked hard to juggle work, home life and studying and finished their work within the timescales provided.

### ■ Person centred

A big thank you to Optima Care's painter and decorator Owen, who has done a fantastic job of decorating the rooms of the people we support in line with their requests.







## Not a lot of people know that...

*Chief Executive Eddie is also Trustee of teenage mental health charity stem4*

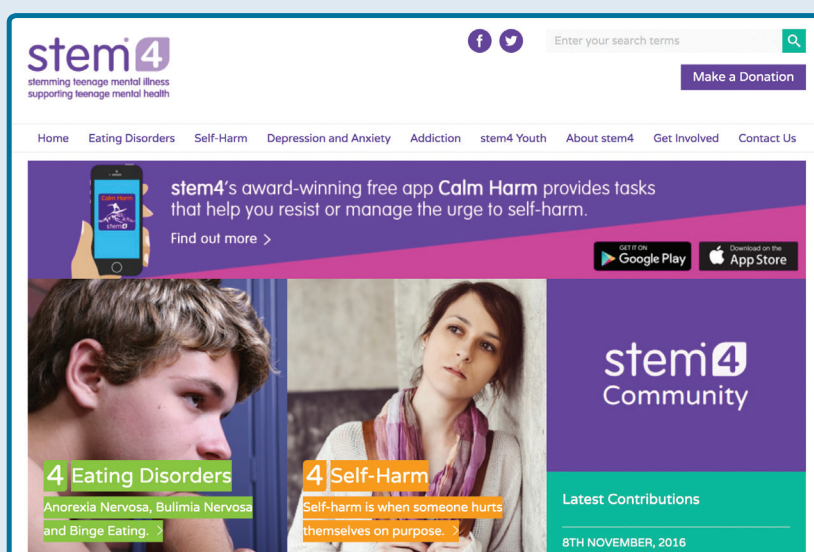
stem4 aims to improve teenage mental health awareness and advice via a number of means, including the deployment of qualified mental health professionals into schools to help educate students, parents and teachers. They target four specific areas of mental health: eating disorders; depression and anxiety; self-harm and addiction.

Their overall goal is to help individuals combat mental illness and follow through on a mentally healthy pathway to adulthood.

Eddie is keen to let everyone know that the charity is currently nominated in the Charity Film Awards for its new film campaign that aims to raise awareness of its Calm Harm app.

This clinician developed smartphone app is free to download and enables young people to manage the urge to self-harm. Using evidence-based principles, the app helps through the use of a range of targeted activities to help alter thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

To view the nominated videos and to vote, go to <http://www.charityfilmawards.com/videos/stem4>



## My view on Supported Living

By Engagement Worker Mia Mihaila

*"I moved to England from Italy and started work at Optima Care in July this year. I was born in Romania but lived in Italy for the past 15 years where I provided supported living to a family with two brothers who had learning disabilities.*

*My English was not very good when I first came but thanks to some amazing help and support from Christina (Optima Care's Training Lead) I was helped to understand all the induction training. I then started shadowing in the three houses that make up Herne Bay Supported Living. That's when my real training started.*

*Every day is different and my experience is limited by each single day. The manager and staff team have a real passion for what they do and for the people they support. Everyone wants the same thing and helps each other out.*

*The best thing about my job is seeing the happiness in the people we support when they do something for the first time. It can be a really simple thing but also a real achievement. I also love the fact that we're communicating even though the individuals here are non-verbal. One girl I work with laughs and hides her face every time I sing. That's real and normal communication.*

*Respecting human rights and equality is very important to me and I find that in England. We have to do everything at the right time, in the right place but that's how it should be. The care system is way ahead of things in Italy.*

*We try to give people a normal life and are out all the time doing things like swimming, cinema, shopping, walking and picnics. I do more here than I would ever do with friends at home!"*