

ourcommunity

NEWS

Eddie's Quarterly Round-up

■ Family survey

We're in the process of rolling out our annual family/carer survey, the results from which will be available soon and will be communicated to everyone. We analyse the results of both this and the staff survey and put together action plans to share and perhaps replicate what's working and address what's not working.

> **More information on this soon.**

■ Making a difference

A huge well done to the night staff at The Chilterns who collectively won the latest Making a Difference award in recognition of their teamwork, dedication and care for the people we support.

> **See the photos from the award presentation on page 8.**

■ Transition service

Our young adult transition service Gate House in Eastry recently received notification from CQC that it will be rated 'Good' in all domains and 'Good' overall. This is fantastic achievement for the service, which only launched last year and is testament to the hard work and dedication of Manager Jo Neiles and her team. Such is the demand for the transition service that Eastry Villas is now being repurposed to also provide such a service & we're taking referral enquiries already.

> **Turn to page 2 to read about a recent transition of a young client into Gate House.**

■ Staff survey

The results of the staff survey are in and it's encouraging to see that the majority of respondents say they are satisfied with their jobs and their immediate managers. However, it's also clear that communication from senior managers could be improved, plus more encouragement to staff is needed to come up with new ideas and ways of doing things.

> **See page 7 for more information.**



Eddie Coombes,
Chief Executive



CQC Ratings

Since October we have achieved 'Good' ratings for Eastry Villas, Gate House, Eastry House, Spencer Road and Seahaven. Supported living also went up from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires improvement'.

We've worked incredibly closely with CQC on an improvement plan for supported living and

welcome the fact that this is acknowledged in the latest report, along with the upgraded rating. The majority of the issues we've faced are linked to ongoing recruitment problems – an issue felt by the majority of the social care sector as a result of significant underfunding on a national level.



Transforming Care

Three of our clients from The Chilterns have been invited to join a new Transforming Care Forum – hosting its first meeting in July - with a view to trying to lending our support to this national agenda to help ensure more people move on to more independent living.

The forum will encourage a

discussion of the longer-term views and aspirations of the people we support and what would help achieve that.

Representatives from Kent Transforming Care Programme, Medway Council, Cedar House mental health hospital and social enterprise Skillnet Group will also be in attendance.

STAFF COMPETITION! TURN TO PAGE 8 >>

News from our young transition service

By Jo Neiles, Registered Manager, Gate House & Eastry Villas

A huge welcome to AC! He moved into Gate House on earlier this year from Madison House in Cliffsend – effectively transferring from children's service into adult services.

AC has settled in well and appears to really enjoy his new room. He still accesses his school (Stone Bay) in Broadstairs as a day student.

Since moving into Gate House, he has visited the cinema several times (He had never been before). He has been on the train to Herne Bay and has now requested to go to London for a day trip - this is being planned for the near future.

AC has also enjoyed trips to Quex Museum, The Spitfire Museum, the arcades, walks around the local community (Herne Bay, Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Dover) and has also enjoyed many meals out at local restaurants.

The staff at Gate House are proactive in ensuring AC still attends the community clubs

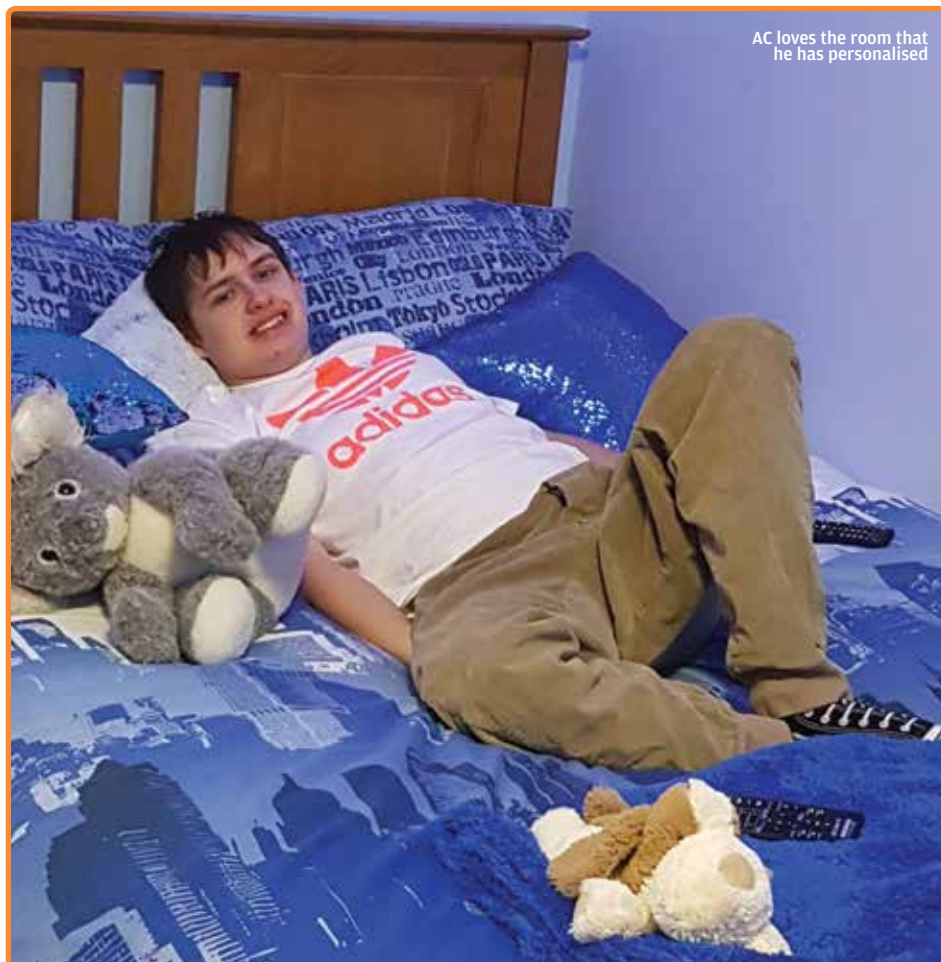
he used to access, such as a bowling session on a Wednesday evening that is run by Mencap and also the Pie Factory youth club on a Friday.

At these clubs he gets to see the staff who used to support him at Madison House and also has the chance to meet up with the young man he used to live with.

AC also suggested that he likes discos, so staff sourced a nearby Disco called the Kander Disco, which is held in Deal every other Thursday and AC really enjoys going to this venue. He spends the evening socialising and also dancing to the latest pop music.

Another plan for AC is to attend the Robot Wars show that is coming to Maidstone. AC watches this TV programme throughout the week, so seeing them up close seems to be a great experience for AC.

All in all, AC has appeared to enjoy his first 3 months at Gate House and we will continue to support him with all the choices he makes.



News from Heron House

By Sharon Homewood, Registered Manager



We held a Red Nose Day event and at Heron House and our own TMVA Instructor Jake volunteered to have his Chest waxed. He was brave but I don't think he will be volunteering again any time soon!

We had families and visitors from other homes and they participated in different things like colouring, pin the nose on the red nose! a tombola as well as food and drink - everything had a red theme.

We raised £104.02 and the team worked hard ensuring there were things to do, visitors were made to feel welcome and enough cakes and refreshments were available.

Everyone enjoyed decorating the house. We also made T-shirts - enough for the people we support and staff.



Matt's musings

Unintended consequences

Recently a member of staff failed to turn up for work, due to a row with her partner.

The knock on effect for the residents, the manager and the rest of the staff team was considerable. When the staff member failed to show, the resident went into crisis, due to the change and uncertainty. The staff team became stretched with others having to work extra hours, or step in to provide cover.

This had ramifications on their personal lives, affecting school runs, and childcare arrangements.

The manager, as usual, had a hundred tasks to do in addition to suddenly finding replacement cover at the last minute. The company was upset because it doesn't like booking agency, due to the costs and the agency staff not knowing the residents as well as Optima Care's staff.

All of this disruption, cost and effort came about because of the no-show for work.

This story got me thinking about our company values and where reliability and trustworthiness comes in...a key factor in a good care service is an effective local team. Working in the care industry can be a tough role sometimes and sharing this pressure with a close, trustworthy team is essential.

I have seen first-hand how a team can work really well when all the members turn up, support each other and focus on working to deliver effective care. For example, unexplored bombs from World

War 2 discovered on a wet Friday afternoon at Seahaven in Deal, allowed me to see how that team pulled together to get through the major incident that ensued.

Many were off shift, yet changed their Friday night plans and came in to support the team on site. I loved seeing the energy and support the team showed each other. A problem shared is a problem halved, so the saying goes...

I saw a small team of staff managing the night shifts at the Chilterns. I saw how just a few of these experienced staff members worked in harmony with each other and trusted each other to manage the complexities of that service.

Recently, I have seen Jo Neiles and her team building the new transition service at Eastry: managing new, very complex residents from their SEN school into our service. When I last visited, the atmosphere at the service was 'buzzing' and this was down to a hardcore few staff, who were reliable, skilled with their care and supported each other beyond the job description.

I am sure that the staff member who didn't show for shift felt it was justified and I'm sure she didn't realise the impact of her decision that day. I know that sometimes all our lives feel like an episode of a soap opera, but I would encourage all of us to consider the unintended consequences of our actions and the impact on the rest of our team.



Matt Jones, Operations Director

Resident's Council in action

The first meeting of our new Resident's Council was well attended. This provides an opportunity for residents to feed back their likes and dislikes about life in an Optima Care service.

It was reported at the first meeting that individuals would like more help with activities and a lot more Optima Care wide events.

Matt commented: "Certain issues affect all residents whilst some are person specific. Obviously this doesn't replace having open communication between residents and staff in our services – indeed this is something we try to nurture – but it does represent a good chance to share experiences, applaud good initiatives and replicate them elsewhere, plus put in place measures to deal with any problems."

COMPETITION...



Calling all budding junk modellers!

We're hosting a competition for our residents to create a junk model that suggests 'Summer'. This could be anything from flowers using egg box cartons to an butterfly fashioned out of an old toilet roll tube...the world's your oyster!

The creations can be displayed inside or outside each setting and there'll be a small prize for the best model at each service.

So time to get your creative juices flowing...

The end-of-life specialists

By Chirsty Lay, Registered Manager of Eastry House

It's a little spoken about area because none of us want to think about dying, but the dignity and respect that comes from ending your days in your own home – as opposed to a hospital ward – in a pain-free and comfortable manner with family or carers around you, cannot be underestimated.

This is one area in which we specialise at Eastry House, a residential service for older adults with a learning disability and who may have physical and mental health needs, including dementia. We also cater for the needs of individuals with a whole host of long-term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

End-of-life care represents an area in which support is much needed, particularly considering the fact that life expectancies for people with learning disabilities are increasing, yet ongoing health issues remain.

We're proud to say that we're developing an enviable reputation amongst local care managers for the support we provide. We're a strong and experienced staff team who've been in post for many years – indeed I've worked for Optima Care for 14 years now. This continuity counts for a lot.

Over the years, we've also developed really

good links with Pilgrim's Hospice in Thanet. They provide end-of-life focused support to our staff team in many ways, from specialist training to designing care plans and extending 24/7 help over the phone.

We also have strong links with local Speech & Language Therapy (SaLT) departments as over 50% of the people we support have eating and swallowing difficulties. Each individual is on very specific guidelines and the local SaLT professionals work with staff to provide tailored support. They've also given us group training on eating and swallowing.

Ensuring that the people we support live a full and active life for as long as possible is integral to our ethos. Giving people control is vital to achieving dignity and respect and that is why we fully involved all our residents in individual activity planning and also house activity planning. We also involve everyone in menu-planning.

Working closely with family members is also essential. Where individuals no longer have family members, we try to arrange advocates or befrienders. One lady that we got to know through the local church has provided such support for the last 10 years.

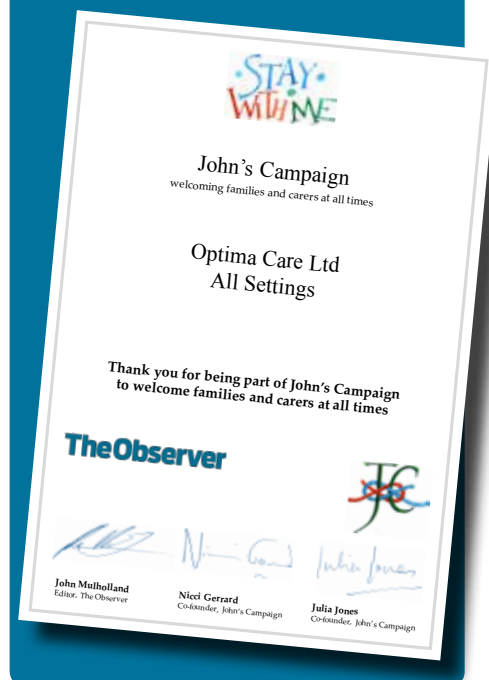


Some feedback from VP, one of the ladies we support at Eastry House

When asked during a group meeting "Would you like to go out anywhere?" VP voluntarily replied: "Yes, to the charity shops in Deal. I like my food. I like the company. Staff are nice and helpful and when you're not well they try to sort things out for you. They keep the home nice and clean. I've got no complaints about the staff or Chirsty."

John's Campaign

We signed up earlier this year to support John's Campaign, helping to raise awareness of the importance of welcoming the families of the people we support into our settings – ensuring wellbeing, quality of life and good recovery outcomes.



Live it well

Optima Care is supporting the Six Ways to Wellbeing campaign: a set of easy and simple things that everyone can do to improve their wellbeing. This initiative was designed by Live It Well to promote better wellbeing and mental health for all residents in Kent and Medway. To read more, go to <http://www.liveitwell.org.uk/ways-to-wellbeing/six-ways-to-wellbeing/>





In focus: Outcomes

By Denise Banks, Registered Manager, The Chilterns

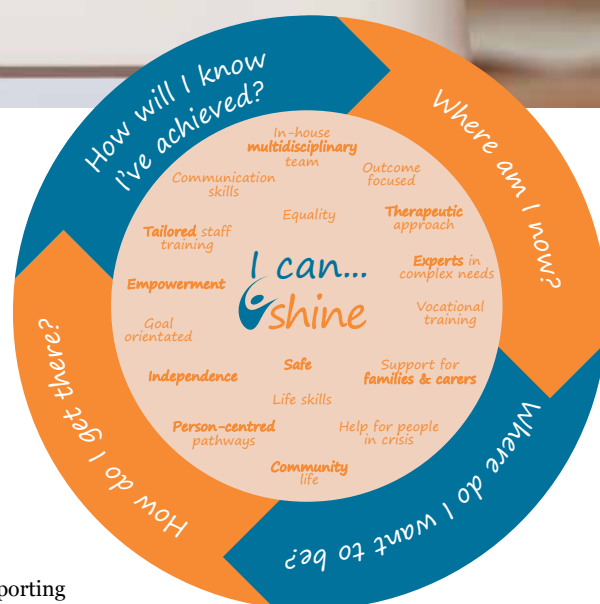
The Chilterns' healthy living and eating programme, designed some time ago by our Support Workers, has now grown into a Positive Weight Management initiative that allows us to track outcomes.

The people we support often come to us after a number of years in a secure setting and are very overweight. They're sedentary and not interested in exercise, healthy lifestyles and nutrition. Plus they're on long-term medication, one of the recognised side effects of which is weight gain. It's a growing issue and requires focus.

In response, we're now tracking weight increase from point of admission to provide a baseline. We're making changes in the kitchen

and focus on portion control and healthy ingredients. We also have a programme of complementary diet and exercise initiatives in place – 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.

All of these initiatives are structured within the framework of our MDT-led Shine model of therapeutic care, focusing on: Where am I now? Where do I want to be? How do I get there? How will I know I've achieved?



The Chilterns' 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.

News In brief

■ Exam success

A big congratulations goes to one of the ladies we support at The Chilterns, who has successfully studied for and passed her entry level 3 in English and Maths. Well done - we're all really proud of you.



■ Mother & baby unit!

Look who took up residence in the training kitchen at The Chilterns...

Partnership working forum

We recently hosted our latest partnership working forum, this time focusing on the forensic pathway and community. In these forums, we bring together representatives from local authorities and CCGs, transforming care programme managers, forensic leads, community and LD nurse managers to share ideas and work through any joint issues faced.

Our guest speaker was Ellie Gordon, Forensic Lead, Learning Disability Programme, NHS England. Ellie discussed the focus now

on physical health following on from the NICE guidelines, the importance of working closely with the police on both information sharing and raising awareness of the issues faced by individuals with mental health.

At this latest event we focused on some of the challenges faced in a community environment with regards to balancing an individual's right to liberty with the need to prevent re-offending, often also in the absence of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. We looked at how everyone in the pathway can work together to better manage the risks.



Meaningful activities represent an essential component of all our care pathways. Here's what one of the people we support at The Chilterns has been up to:

Budding chef

From notes by Allison Guy,
Support Worker

JB appears very keen to participate in all areas, from approaching the kitchen to obtain ingredients to preparing the food and eating it! He has now made: vegetable stew, pizza with no sugar or yeast involved and cheese and potato pie with parmesan crisp.

I've given him some general notes on the recipes and he would now like to write up the three meals himself and ask Activity Co-Ordinators to laminate them for him. He agrees it would be beneficial to display these in the kitchen area to remind himself of his achievements and sense of enablement. He is very pleased with himself.

He also enjoys sitting with staff and engaging with us whilst at the table and offers to share his meal. It is a really nice experience for staff and appears to be the same for JB. The Chilterns' Healthy Eating Group, which works in partnership with NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to promote healthy choices and lifestyles.

Green fingers

JB has been busy clearing out a section of the Chilterns' garden that has been in much need of some TLC for some time! He cleared a truck load of ivy, made some flower beds, found and planted flowers and is taking great pride in his work. It's helped him understand that meaningful work keeps him happy.



A big welcome

...to new client DB from all the team. DB was successfully transitioned to Seahaven and is much enjoying his new home. Well done to the staff team at Seahaven.



Testimonial: Seahaven team

"Seahaven has been a godsend for me, my wife and our son and we can't thank you all enough. We're so happy that he is settled. We know that we don't have to worry about him now as he is at Seahaven."

Mr Saw

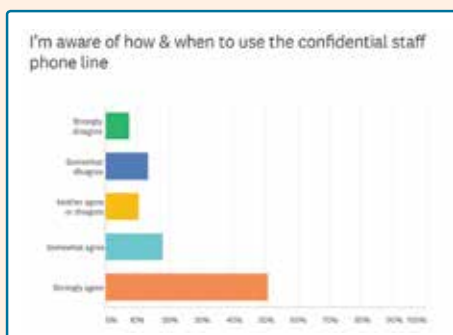
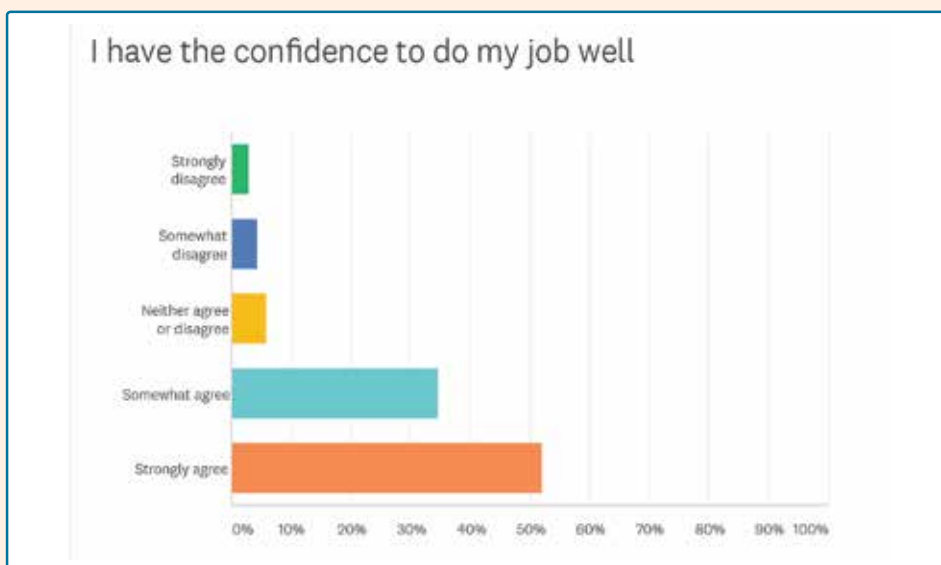
Latest staff survey results

Well over a third (36%) of our total number of staff responded to the latest staff survey, which is a fantastic result. This survey represents a vital measure, allowing us to review care quality and responsiveness as an organisation. It's essential that we hear from our employees, both through this medium but also via managers and at our regular Staff Consultative Committee (SCC).

Our most recent staff survey was distributed via a free online tool, in addition to some paper versions, to help ensure the best possible response.

You'll see here some graphs showing some of the key findings. The full results will be collated and shared with the service managers and also staff representatives at the SCC, with a view to sharing things that are working well and looking at ways to address areas of concern.

It's hugely encouraging to see that 87% agreed (52% of those strongly agreeing) with the statement 'I have the confidence to do my job well'. Also, 63% overall agree (39% strongly) 'My job makes good use of my skills and abilities' but it's somewhat concerning that 29% disagree – this needs investigating further. Also, 63% agree (41% strongly) that their manager visibly demonstrates a commitment to quality.



However, a slightly lower percentage at 57% agree (28% strongly) that senior managers demonstrate a commitment to quality. This shows a slight disconnect and a need for us to assess our current channels of communication, which include: the SCC, Managers' Operations Meetings from which info is passed on to staff during team meetings in the services, training at the service centre and in service, payslip communications where required and newsletters, plus support to service managers in implementing the Clinical Governance Cycle.

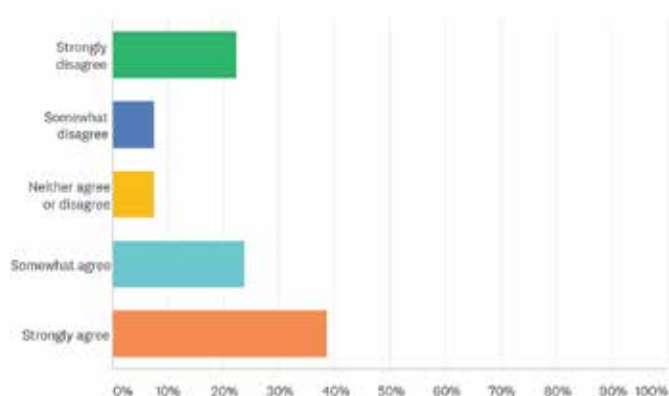
Clearly, something amongst these channels isn't working because one of the biggest issues highlighted by the survey is 45% disagree (29% of those strongly) with the statement 'The company keeps us informed about matters affecting us'. Also a quarter (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Meanwhile, it's great to see that 69% of respondents agreed with the statement 'I'm aware of how and when to use the confidential staff phone line', but not so great that 20% disagreed and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. The phone number is displayed in all settings (see poster on this page) and initial training is provided in its use, but we clearly

need to do more to explain when and how it should be used so that 100% of staff are aware.

More information on next steps will be shared once we've had a chance to analyse the results properly and discuss with managers and SCC representatives.

My job makes good use of my skills and abilities



Call for SCC volunteers

Representation on the SCC needs a boost. We're looking for volunteer representatives from each setting to come along to the service centre and meet with peers from other services every couple of months. It's an ideal opportunity to make your voice heard and represent your fellow colleagues' views.

To find out more and / or volunteer, email dawn.dale@optimacare.co.uk



This time our 'Making a difference' accolades go to...

The Chilterns night staff

The Chilterns night staff were nominated by Registered Manager Denise Banks in recognition of the huge support they provide to all our individuals, in terms of excellent consistency and the high-level of support, plus superb co-operation with each other.

Matt Jones, Optima Care's Operations Director, presented the team with their £100 cheque. Discussions were had about how the shared prize money would be spent and ranged from £100 worth of lottery tickets to a new coffee machine in the staff room to help keep them alert at night!



Our maintenance man Ray

Ray has just recently retired so it was lovely that we could send him off with this parting gift as a gesture of our thanks for all his support. His nomination came from Kerry Crane, Registered Manager of Spenser Road and also BH, one of the people we support at that setting:



"Ray comes to Spenser Rd every week, to do odd jobs around the home. BH is always so happy to see him and over the last few months Ray has been showing him all types of DIY. BH has now got himself overalls to wear, and when Ray comes he will get his overalls on and will help out.

"BH has helped paint walls, put up pictures, measure for blinds, cut the grass, put fire extinguishers on walls, change batteries in fire door stops and lots more, all under the guidance of Ray. Ray has been explaining how to do things, and BH has been really taking note. I feel Ray, who has said he is going to retire this year, is training BH up for his job, which I'm sure he would not have as much fun doing without Ray!"

Coffee & Bake Off!

By Kerry Crane, Registered Manager at Spenser Road

BH from Spenser Road came up with the idea of a coffee morning at one of our council meetings for the people we support. He wanted something for all the settings to do together. BH designed the invitations, which were sent out to all the settings.



He decided upon what cakes needed to be made and got all the other people we support at Spenser Road involved in baking them. We had our own little Bake Off the day before!

We also had the local ice-cream van round, so everyone could enjoy an ice-cream as it was a lovely sunny day.

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 15th September 2017. The winner will be notified by Friday 29th September 2017 and will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.