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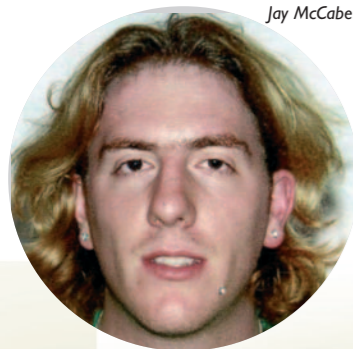
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# the grapevine

Opportunity Housing Trust 20 years of changing lives

In every edition of The Grapevine we talk to four members of OHT. This time it's the turn of four Support Team Managers.



Jay McCabe



Ian Isaacs



Anita Bowen



Jane Thomas

## Jay McCabe

**The best thing about my job is...** The variety and pace of my job, the opportunity to meet lovely people and each day is a new challenge.

### If you were an animal what would you be (and why)?

A lion. Because I am warm, love groups and have a large grin, however when challenged I can have a ferocious temper and I love having my mane and ego stroked regularly.

**My favourite meal is...** Steak and kidney pudding with mash and peas and lots of sweet hot chocolate pudding with angel delight or crème caramel.

**If you could have two famous people to dinner, who would they be?... Dali Lama - For his spiritual wisdom.**

Dawn French - For her sense of humour.

**How would you spend your ideal weekend?** Resting on a hot island and then dancing the night away.

### Top tips for doing the job well...

- Be positive, think positively, accept that everyone has flaws and needs the opportunity to learn, a little more acceptance and a little less judgement.
- Always remember that as one door closes, another one opens.
- Always remain open to possibilities

## Ian Isaacs

**The best thing about my job is...** Making a difference

**If you were an animal what would you be (and why)?** Golden Labrador

**My favourite meal is...** Pasta

**If you could have two famous people to dinner, who would they be?... Alistair Cook and Will Young**

**How would you spend your ideal weekend?** Taking my family to watch Wales beat England, at anything.

**Top tips for doing the job well...** Having a sense of humour

## Anita Bowen

**The best thing about my job is...** the look on someone's face when they realise they've achieved something they really wanted to do, and making a difference, no matter how small. Corny, but true.

### If you were an animal what would you be (and why)?

I'd like to be a dragon, but if I have to pick a real one I'd say probably a Peregrine falcon, because I could see the landscape for miles and be able to fly at up to 200mph...what a rush!

**My favourite meal is...** a juicy lamb shank in a red wine sauce, served with mashed potato and sweet crunchy veg. I was at the Baskerville Hall Hotel near Hay on Wye last weekend and ordered it for dinner, I can still taste it!

**If you could have two famous people to dinner, who would they be?...** ooo, only two? Unfair. But for pure entertainment value, lets say...Charles Darwin and Pope John Paul II, then sit back and enjoy the inevitable discussions whilst getting quietly sloshed.

**How would you spend your ideal weekend?** My ideal weekend would be camping in West Wales with husband Steve and my beautiful black labrador, Fflynt, touring the countryside and stopping off at various beauty spots, taking in the usual castles, ancient monuments etc, a big flask of tea and no kids!

**Top tips for doing the job well...** hmmm, I'm no expert, but I'd say listen to your team, support them and be understanding - a happy team means happy tenants. Accept advice from others and value their opinions and experience, and don't take work home with you!

## Jane Thomas

**The best thing about my job is...** seeing people progress in all aspects of their lives. Gaining self worth and pride in themselves and confidence.

**If you were an animal what would you be (and why)?** I would be a crocodile, top of the predator chain, not to be messed with and can be snappy at times if provoked. If all else fails I could end up in the fashion world as a designer handbag!!!

**My favourite meal is...** anything that prepared for me but parsley sauce dinner is something I love, as long as it is homemade.

**If you could have two famous people to dinner, who would they be?** Johnny Depp would be my ideal dessert with George Clooney as a middle course. Reasons for me choosing these two are easy I always like to have a nice view while I eat.

**How would you spend your ideal weekend?** Walking my



## Winners nominated for Welsh Awards

**In light of the success of last year's awards programme which was an important part of our 20th anniversary celebrations, we've decided to put all our winners forward for the 2006 Wales Care Awards, organised by Care Forum Wales.**

Our champions being nominated are

Dave Eveleigh, Sandra Jones, Chris Wysom, Sally Haddock, Rachel Reeves, Kate Davies, Deborah Lawrence, Kim Powell, Jeff Thomas and Michelle Aldridge.

Kay Williams, Director of Human Resources, explains: "We're confident that the quality of support offered by OHT employees is good enough to compete on a national stage. We were thrilled with the entries and are delighted to be able to put

our winners forward for national recognition."

The Care Forum Wales Awards take place at City Hall in Cardiff in November. Awards will be given by the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Dr Brian Gibbons, AM.

For those of you who weren't able to join us at our own event at the end of last year, please turn to the middle pages

## Plans for 2006 / 2007 Unveiled

Having achieved – and celebrated in style – 20 years of changing lives in 2005, we've now turned our heads to putting together our business plan for 2006/7.

The document, which is currently in its draft format, is with the OHT board for approval and will shortly be available to all Opportunity Housing Trust employees.

Focusing on our core values and principles, the report looks back at the challenges, successes and achievements of 2005/6 in a bid to prepare us well for this year and next.

With the mission statement 'To empower and support people with a disability to enjoy a valued life in their community,' we've detailed our aims for 2006/7 as follows:

- **Knowing where we're going and developing key priorities** including focusing on improving our IT systems; enhancing communications; and exploring opportunities in current and alternative service areas and models.

- **Developing an organisation that understands, values and develops employees and the people they support** including raising the profile of tenant participation; continuing to seek recognition for the service user, staff and organisational achievement;

developing the way we implement our person centred approaches in delivering services; and continuing to develop our training and development programme.

- **Being able to demonstrate the difference our support makes in the lives of people and how we develop staff to do this** including redefining our tenant participation structure and strategy; continuing to develop our quality assurance processes; and working towards achieving National Minimum Standards qualification targets.

- **Ensuring that the organisation is viable and capable of responding to the changing environment in which we operate** including exploring the base

# How we recruited in 2005

The ongoing challenge of recruitment led to the human resources division expanding on the traditional methods of advertising in 2005 – and it seems to have paid off.

A radio campaign run by Red Dragon in September to help boost interest had a great impact by the end of the year, resulting in one of the lowest vacancy levels our organisation has seen for quite some time.

A number of employees also commented that the improved staffing levels had been noticed by the team. The plan is to continue to consider using radio this year, in addition to our more traditional methods of advertising in newspapers, job centres and open days.

We also advertised in Job Opportunities magazine which reached a massive audience across all OHT patches and we're still advertising in certain Kwik Save and Somerfield stores across our operational areas.

Kay Williams said: "At the beginning of 2005 vacancies were pretty high across the organisation. Towards the end of the year, they were at their lowest for some time so that's very good news."

Kay added: "Last year, we were also able to enrol new employees before CRB checks were returned, providing certain criteria were

met, which dramatically reduced the length of time between a successful interview and start date.

"Recently, however CSIW has reinforced the regulation to only employ staff after a satisfactory CRB check is in place so we'll continue to monitor this and will feedback to the All Wales Community Living Network and the Care Council."



## An invitation to celebrate your achievements

To celebrate the success of employees achieving their NVQ qualification, an awards ceremony was held on Tuesday 28th March at which presentations of certificates were made.

Additionally anyone achieving their relevant NVQ in the future will be entitled to the following (see table right):

And...

The introduction of the new NVQ Strategy will mean that on average 120 candidates will be successfully achieving a relevant NVQ during 2006/early 2007. Two intakes of new candidates will take place and anyone wishing to participate in 2006/7 NVQ programme should apply via their line manager. Well done to everyone who has been successful so far!

<b>PAs level 2</b>	£250 on completion of 4(new award)/5 units (old award). £250 on full completion
<b>SDWs level 3</b>	£250 on completion of 4 new award units. Increment on achievement of full qualification. Uplift processed on confirmation of qualification. Subsequent increments awarded in line with existing policy e.g if qual increment paid on 20th Oct no increment the following April. If increment paid April to Sept then increment due the following April
<b>ASTMs level 3</b>	£250 on completion of 4 new award units £275 on completion of full qualification
<b>STMs level 4</b>	£250 on completion of 5 units. Increment on full qualification. Application same as SDWs
<b>SSAMs level 5</b>	£250 for 5 units. Increment of full qualification. Application same as SDWs



## What a makeover!

A makeover at our Cardiff respite homes has exceeded all our expectations – and we think Lawrence Llewellyn Bowen would be proud!

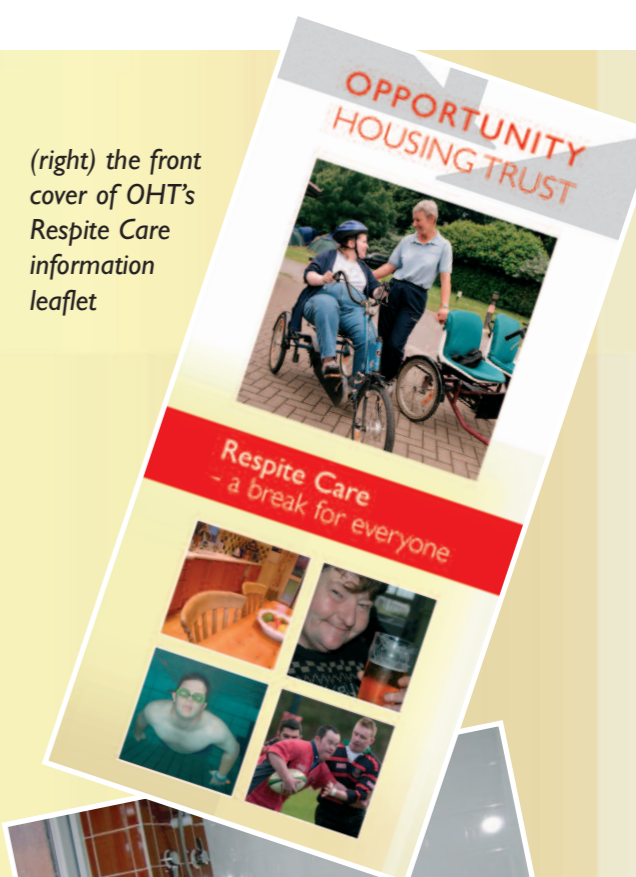
The two houses on Pantbach Avenue and Partridge Road have been transformed thanks to a major internal refurbishment and have re-opened WITH a new look service.

Jo Lawson, Support Services Area Manager responsible for respite, explains how the changes came about: "The properties are both registered care homes and we needed to carry out improvements to comply with the physical standards required under the Care Standards Act 2000."

"At Pantbach Avenue this meant that all bedrooms and communal areas were redecorated. We also installed a new kitchen and utility room, and replaced the old doors.

"At Partridge Road, the house underwent some structural changes downstairs and was decorated from top to bottom. We've lost the downstairs bedroom and bathroom and put in a new utility room and toilet instead. There's also a much larger and brighter dining and kitchen area now which is great."

Here are some pictures of the new look houses...



(right) the front cover of OHT's Respite Care information leaflet





# We celebrated in style!

In 2005, we enjoyed a year of celebrations to mark OHT's 20th anniversary. For many, the highlight of the year was the ceremony at the All Nations Centre in November, with special guests The First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, and Falklands veteran Simon Weston OBE.

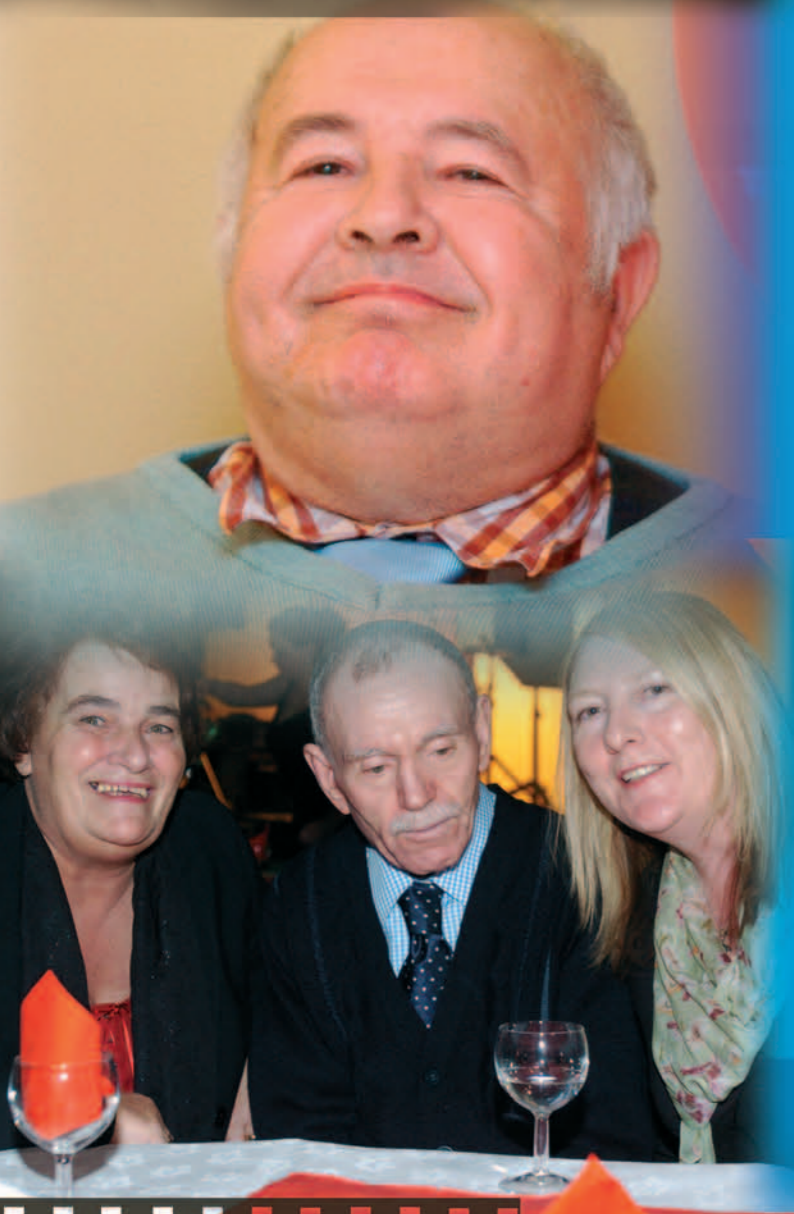
As part of the festivities, we announced the winners of our first Opportunity Housing Trust Awards and launched the short film '20 Years of Changing Lives,' which we commissioned to show the good work of OHT.

The event was attended by more than 400 people. For those of you who weren't able to join us, here are some pictures from the evening...

P.S. You'll be pleased to know that we're already planning a number of staff parties in 2006 as well – after all it is our 21st!



*anniversary celebration  
20 years of changing lives*





## Steve speaks up

At the end of last year, our chief executive Steve Cox, spoke to the Western Mail about the issues facing the voluntary care sector. This is what he said...

*“Looking back over the last 20 years, it’s been a roller coaster of experiences. There’s little doubt that the honeymoon period for community care is over.*

*“When the All Wales Strategy was launched, it was made up of pioneering, groundbreaking values and principles. It allowed organisations like ours to flourish. For a number of years, we made great strides bringing people into the community who had never been given a taste of independence. For everyone involved it was a hugely positive time.*

*“Towards the end of the closure programme the pace of resettlement placed extra requirements on those involved to respond very quickly to meet the growing demands being placed on it. This led to less time to properly induct staff and get the values imbedded into their working practice.*

*“At the same time the uplift each year on our grant funding from local authorities often fell well below the level of inflation which in turn made the salaries we could offer for the care sector less and less attractive”.*

*“Looking back, I think the sector managed these difficulties well. The goodwill and commitment of our highly trained and experienced workforce pulled us through. My concern is that we can’t rely on goodwill alone for the future. The sector needs real investment.*

*“The funding of the voluntary sector is reaching crisis point. We want to deliver a quality service, but that costs. Retention and recruitment is a huge issue for the sector. Across the board, it’s a struggle. What we need is some real investment.*

*“The All Wales Strategy meant something to the care sector and is still hugely respected. There is a new policy guidance document from the Assembly called Fulfilling the Promises and it is not being viewed with sufficient status by local authorities to the extent the All Wales Strategy was. The new Mental Capacity Bill also gives us concerns. Previous government policy enhanced the lives of people with learning difficulties, we must be sure the new bill when it becomes an act, does not take us back”.*

*“The whole sector has moved on leaps and bounds in the last 20 years, it would be tragic if we didn’t keep moving forward. There is a need for the Assembly to demonstrate its commitment to these principles by showing continued leadership in policy development that champions innovative, high quality services for people with learning disabilities and their families but at the same time safeguards us from complacency. This could be achieved through a National Service Framework building on Fulfilling the Promises and this is something the voluntary sector has been pushing for.”*

## Consultation

Back in February, a group of 15 employees from a cross section of job roles across support services and departments – and mirroring local authority areas – came together to discuss the features of consultation and to ask the question: Why do it?

Following the day, we decided to move forward by mapping OHT’s current methods of consultation and get feedback from staff and managers on how effective these methods are for the organisation.

The plan now is to meet with as many staff as possible to interview them personally or ask them to complete a questionnaire. This will happen in April and May.

We expect this research will put us in a strong position to make suggestions for future consultation methods.

### What is consultation?

Consultation is about the provision of information that is accessible and provided in good time for people to consider in order to be able to offer thoughts/views/opinions and that these views are considered before decisions are made. Following a decision feedback is given on the rationale for the decision.

### Why consult?

- More planned decisions (not last minute)
- Decisions made will have given more consideration to front-line staff.
- Can improve service we provide
- Can lead to staff feeling valued and listened to.
- Can lead to increased morale/motivation.
- A greater understanding in/across job roles
- A greater understanding of issues faced at all levels

## Focus on...

In every edition of The Grapevine, we focus on one area of OHT in particular. This time we’re assessing the workload of our STMs.

While we all welcome legislation to improve the lives of service users, there is little argument that it does place extra demands on people working within the care sector.

This has led to a discussion at Director Management Team level about the extra demands on Support Team Managers. As a result of the discussion we agreed an objective for our 05/06 Business Plan would be to review the workload of STM’s, with a view to making recommendations for priority work areas/tasks to facilitate a manageable workload.

### The process

A cross representative group was led by Mandy Evans and STM’s were asked to complete a workload assessment log of their work activity for a four week period.

49.4% of the logs were returned which gave us information on the range of tasks being completed by managers, and the amounts of time needed to complete tasks across the organisation and across patch areas. In brief, the logs told us that managers work an average of 39 hours a week and are all prioritising similar work activities.

### Proposed Priority Areas

Having considered all the areas of work and activity, we looked at determining what were the priorities for managers – that is those activities that can only be completed by the STM and are necessary for OHT to meet its regulatory obligations.

We agreed these as:

- **Hands on support**
- **Service planning and implementation**
- **Staff management**
- **Patch meetings**
- **Office duty**

In addition, there is ongoing work to look at the following areas with the aim of introducing more effective ways of working and to reduce the time requirements on managers:

- **Time sheets, rota management/writing rotas, contract audit**
- **Health and safety monitoring and other checks**
- **Office duty**
- **Recruitment**
- **Management of new work**

The following tasks, whilst not being part of the STM job description, are also part and parcel of the role. The assessment of these will be based on several factors including the number of service users and size of the support team.

In these cases, there may be consideration to increase the management input with an assistant manager or to release a manager from rota and replace them with support staff.

- **Delivery of organisational training**
- **RMA**
- **Policy development**
- **Union work**
- **TP enabler (3/5 hours a week capacity required)**

### Other tasks that need to be considered

- **TP work of the STM (house meeting checks, house meeting responses, TP strategy objectives)**
- **Absence management**
- **Training reports**
- **Recruitment i.e. short listing, preparing interviews, interviewing, chasing references, arranging start dates, completing CRW checklists**
- **Exit interviews**

The report has been considered by DMT and it is clear that we need to do some further work in relation to working more efficiently and the tasks yet to be included. Some of this work is already underway and when it is complete we will report on the final priorities.

We will be making recommendations for change with a view of agreeing priority areas and tasks within a manageable work load.