



Pembrokeshire Office
19 Cartlett
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA61 2LH
Tel :01437 774430
Fax: 01437 766265

Aberystwyth Office
Aga House
Glan Yr Afon
Industrial Estate
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3JQ
Tel :01970 631060
Fax: 01970 630617

Llanishen Office
Unit 5
Cleeve House
Lambourne Crescent
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GP
Tel :029 2075 1122
Fax: 029 2075 9966

Fairoak Office
Library Court
Fairoak Road
Roath
Cardiff
CF24 4PX
Tel :029 2023 6216
Fax: 029 2038 3090

Vale Office
222 Holton Road
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 4HS
Tel :01446 700231
Fax: 01446 700240

Bridgend Office
Units 4b, 4c
Innovation Centre
Bridgend Science
Park
Bridgend
CF31 3NA
Tel :01656 769073
Fax: 01656 769072

www.oht.org.uk

the grapevine

Opportunity Housing Trust changing lives since 1985

Talking to Four Trustees

In every edition of The Grapevine, we talk to four members of the OHT team. This time, it's the turn of the trustees.

Alan Davis



Alan Davis

When and why did you get involved with Opportunity Housing Trust?

I have been involved with OHT ever since it started 20 years ago. They simply needed someone to act as their treasurer and I met the requirements as I was an accountant and the parent of a son with learning disabilities.

Which three words describe you best?

Man, grey suit

Who is your role model?

I suppose I would say Aneurin Bevan – as the pioneer of the health service.

What is your proudest achievement?

Being a husband and father.

What was your first job?

I was a trainee clerk in an accountants.

What do you like most about your involvement with OHT?

Feeling that we can make an impact and a difference in the lives of our clients.

Anne Dunne

When and why did you get involved with Opportunity Housing Trust?

Anne Dunne



Two years ago when I retired. I had always worked with adolescents with learning disabilities and was interested to see how they were catered for in the community when they got older.

Which three words describe you best?

Dynamic, caring and fun.

Who is your role model?

My father.

What is your proudest achievement?

My children.

What was your first job?

Teaching in Leeds.

What do you like most about your involvement with OHT?

I like working with a group of people who are anxious to support the work of OHT and provide an excellent service.

Granville Tatham

When and why did you get involved with Opportunity Housing Trust?

The previous head of OHT approached me in 1995-1996 and as I was semi-retired I decided to look around. I was impressed by what I saw and have been involved ever since.

Which three words describe you best?

Granville Tatham



Optimistic, good natured and generous.

Who is your role model?

I think my role model would be my mum. She was physically disabled and yet lived a full life. She was also incredibly patient – a quality which I really admire.

What is your proudest achievement?

Becoming Deputy Lord Mayor (1995-1996) when my wife was Lady Mayoress, particularly as I am a Yorkshire man born and bred! It was a proud and humbling experience to represent the city and its 310,000 residents, warts and all.

What was your first job?

I was an errand boy for Home and Colonial, a grocer's store – very much the Tesco's of the day! It was a choice between that and going down the pit, which my mum really didn't want. I moved up to branch manager over seven years.

What do you like most about your involvement with OHT?

I love seeing clients becoming part of the community and achieving tremendous things as a result of that.

Robin Jones

When and why did you get involved with Opportunity Housing Trust?

Robin Jones



When and why did you get involved with Opportunity Housing Trust? I was invited to join 13 years ago when I retired from the bank. I don't have a background in this area and so have found it a great learning curve.

Which three words describe you best?

Easy-going, understanding and accepting.

Who is your role model?

I had a manager I particularly looked up to in the bank. At the age of 27 he gave me the responsibility of arranging loans for students and young people. He allowed me to do this at my discretion and encouraged me tremendously. He was a delightful gentleman.

What is your proudest achievement?

Working for 42 years at Natwest Bank, progressing up the ladder and achieving four board positions.

What was your first job?

I got my first job in the bank at 16 and retired at 58, after 42 years!

What do you like most about your involvement with OHT?

Having been involved with OHT for 12 years I have seen the huge difference that being part of the community has made to our clients as opposed to when people were placed in institutions. The difference in attitude is remarkable.

Commissioning of services for adults with a Learning Disability in Cardiff

Most of you will know that quite a few local authorities are re tendering many of their learning disabilities services. For most of them, a desire to commission quality services is still a priority, but for all Local Authorities, the financial pressures are such that they must ensure that they are still getting value for money.

OHT is currently tendering for the services we provide in the Vale of Glamorgan and the re tendering of services in Cardiff has just been concluded.

Following the submission of the written documentation and costings, and the interviews held with service users, parents and carers, OHT has been recommended for 3 of the 6 localities in Cardiff.

This is a tremendous achievement for us especially as the other 3 localities were awarded to 3 separate organisations, two of whom do not currently work in the area. Of the current six providers only two will remain. However, the funding available will reduce and this will mean we will have to make efficiency savings to central services.

It is going to be a very busy time for us as services are transferred between organisations and we will be providing information on a regular basis to those staff and service users that this affects in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

There is no doubt that the sector faces a real challenge but change is needed to ensure that OHT and organisations like us keep fresh and innovative in delivering quality services to people with a learning disability. I am confident that we can face up to this challenge.

Stephen Cox Chief Executive



Stephen Cox

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(Above L - R) Sandra Jones, Kim Powell, Sally Haddock and Debbie Lawrence

Congratulations Kim and Deborah!

We're delighted to be able to say a huge well done to two members of our team who picked up awards at the Wales Care Awards.

Kim Powell received an award for Young Care Practitioner and Deborah Lawrence won in Registered Manager of the Year. Brian Gibbons, Welsh Assembly Minister for Health and Social Services described all the winners as 'champions of the care sector'.

Deborah has worked with us at OHT for 17 years and has been delighted to see how much people can achieve with the lives given the right support and resources. She has helped us with recruitment procedures. With support from Deb, a number in her team have achieved their NVQ's over recent months.

Kim joined us about four years ago and was also a winner at our internal awards last November. She is an assistant manager with a team of 16 people and actively supports residents to be involved in the community.

In addition, Sally Haddock and Sandra Jones also made the final shortlist in their categories. All four staff were against stiff competition as there were a record number of entries from across Wales so a big WELLDONE from all of us at OHT.

Wales Care Awards 2007

Plans are already in place for this years Wales Care Awards on the 2 November and it would be great to see us taking part again.

Nominations are open and the deadline for entries is the 16 April. More information is available at www.careforumwales.org.



Internal Awards

Congratulations also go to our members of staff who took part in the Team Champion OHT awards as nominated by your colleagues. The thirteen award winners were; Amanda Swan, Claudia Pena, Peter Bates, Helen Gurd, Jan John, Jackie White, Paul Britton, Ann Harry, Ken Deacon, Alan Huxtable, Lyn Barnett, Deborah Mackenzie and Sarah Newton. A special award was made to Mandy Evans for all her hard work particularly over the last 12 months.

The 'Opportunity Housing Trust Champion of the Year 2006' went to Sarah Newton and Deborah Mackenzie for their commitment, promotion of values, team skills and qualifications gained.

Well done to all!

One of the over all winners Sarah Newton



Kenneth Deacon

Alan Huxtable



Jan John



Lyn Barnett



Staff survey

Many of you took part in the staff survey which we sent out in the autumn. This was a chance for you to have a say about how you feel things are managed at OHT and what we need to do to improve the way we work and how it affects you.

The results have now come in and there is a lot for us to go through but we felt it would be good to keep you up-to-date with the latest.

The highest score in the survey revealed that 99% of you believe you act in accordance with our mission statement and appreciate the value of team meetings. There were also scores indicating a high level of satisfaction with feeling comfortable to ask for help from colleagues, understanding how your job contributes to the broad aims of OHT, and enjoying the two way communication which is encouraged within the company.

Comments included;

'OHT is a good employer. It should keep up the good work it's doing'

'It is good that OHT encourage hands on managers'

'The company is good at getting the message across about why we work for OHT'

Concerns were raised surrounding the level of pay, union representation and sufficient recognition of staff for the work that they do. Many of you felt that more time needs to be spent on the induction process and that there needs to be more opportunity for shadowing and mentoring.

Comments included;

'My induction would have been improved by a workbook format to tick of what I've been shown and what I have done i.e. read management guidelines, personal care plans, risk plans e.t.c'

'Sometimes being more open would be good and it would be good to stop some staff being negative'

Our next steps in making sure we make the changes you've asked for are to compile a full report of your responses. This report will then make it possible for us to put action plans into place. Throughout this process we will be communicating with you to make sure you are aware of the changes we are putting into place and to respond to any other comments which you have.

100 NVQ's

It's been a good year for OHT as over 100 members of staff team have achieved their NVQ's.

Chief executive of OHT, Steve Cox, said: 'NVQ's are a strong recognition of the standards and skills which individuals display in the jobs that they do and so to see so many staff from OHT achieve this qualification really is fantastic. It means we are able to provide top quality care for our service users.'



AGM

Our AGM took place on 19 December and a good number of people were able to attend. The main business of the meeting was the awarding of the NVQ's as well as a discussion of the way forward for OHT.

Smoke free?

The Smoke-Free Premises etc (Wales) Regulations 2007 coming into force on the 2nd April 2007 are not a surprise to us at OHT, as we have had a comprehensive Non Smoking Policy in place since 1993.

Our policy gives a clear indication of the organisations commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment for service users and employees. Our continued aim is to support service users who smoke to be aware of the health effects of smoking, so they are able to make informed decisions. We also support co-tenants to negotiate with each other around smoking in their homes, where only one or two service users may smoke in a shared house.

Staff will continue to not be permitted to smoke in service users houses or vehicles, and may only smoke

with the permission of service users in their garden. (This should be away from open doors and windows to prevent smoke drifting back into the house).

Any concerns that staff may have in relation to working in an environment where service users smoke can be discussed with their line managers so compromises can be sorted out.



The next 10 years...

The Welsh Assembly Government has launched its vision for the next 10 years of social services, entitled 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities'. <http://new.wales.gov.uk/?lang=en>

The strategy outlines a vision of a service which centres on the needs of citizens and communities to make sure people are supported earlier and retain their independence for longer.

Local government across Wales will continue to provide core social services and take the lead in commissioning services from a range of organisations such as ourselves.

The Welsh Assembly Government has promised that improvements will be made year on year and that the impact will be noticed by the general public in a number of ways, including; having a greater say in how services are designed and provided, earlier interventions to ensure independence and the needs of carers also being recognised and supported. Other factors include older people being supported at home, fewer children requiring social services and dignity, privacy and equality

being at the centre of all services.

Chief executive of OHT, Steve Cox said, 'We hope that such a strategy will encourage and nurture not for profit providers such as OHT.

The steps taken by WAG to improve training, skills and quality of the social care workforce, are welcomed as many of the ambitions can only be achieved through the development of a more highly skilled and crucially a better paid workforce.

We must all recognise that "achieving outcomes" for people is the current buzz phrase, but more importantly there has to be agreement on what are meaningful and valued outcomes for people. The worry is that the extent of the outcomes that can be achieved will be heavily influenced by the funding available to support service delivery.

We can only hope that the positive picture this document creates for the future of Social services becomes a reality and that those responsible in statutory Health and Social Services recognise and value the role of the voluntary sector in meeting the challenge'.

Focus on... Pembrokeshire

April sees the 1st anniversary of OHT moving into Pembrokeshire so we thought it would be a good opportunity to focus on the work which has taken place there throughout the year.

A full management team

In the early days we had a high level of manager and staff vacancies and so were heavily dependent on teamwork to make sure we achieved as much as we could. Now we have a full management team we are continuing to build that teamwork and our staff work in a flexible way, embracing the core standards of supporting people in their own homes and moving away from the residential care provision.

Marion Powell, Linda Manson, Marc Davies, Paul Foster and Sam Warden make up our management team, with Matthew Clark and Maggy Townshend acting as assistant managers.

We have been offered a huge amount of support from OHT staff across the organisation and a big thank you to those who have helped out. Staff in Pembrokeshire have commented on how beneficial this has been. We look forward to learning as much as possible from the other regions of OHT.

Our office co-ordinator, Jane McClean, has helped us to arrange a whole series of training events for our staff including essential health and safety and even more essential topics such as active support and an introduction to values alongside risk management.

These training sessions have provided the support needed for the introduction of 'About me' information files. Putting these files together is a lengthy process as there is so much that families and service users want to include but it's great to stimulate discussion and hear about people's dreams and ambitions.

We held a service user meeting during the year where people had the opportunity to hear about and see examples of how service users can be involved in recruitment, train as trainers, conferences and think about how to make our messages heard.

The service users:



Donna

Donna goes along to our local church on a weekly basis. This is part of supporting inclusion and belonging in the local community and means Donna has got to know other people. Donna said, *'This is me meeting Reverend Steve at the church. I greet him at the entrance every week.'*



Chris

Chris is passionate about music and has recently started studying literacy and numeracy skills in order to aid future employment opportunities. Chris said, *'The staff at OHT encourage me to achieve the things I want rather than just telling me what to do. They are good because they teach me the right way to do things.'*

Ashley



Ashley currently works for Pembrokeshire County Council in Stackpole as a chef and thoroughly enjoys the work he does there. He said, *'I enjoy living an independent life and it is good to know that the staff from OHT are available if I need any advice.'*

Dianna



Dianna is currently studying an NVQ in catering at Pembrokeshire College. This is part of her preparation for future employment.

The future....

To help service users in realising their full potential and personal ambitions we will be implementing individual planning and quality of life training to assist staff in taking this forward. We also want to put into place the work from our Tenants Participation Plan which will include setting up a service user group, training on recruitment and presentation skills and a local tenants conference.

We are working towards getting our vacancy figures below 10% and have drafted our staff recruitment plan until the summer. We will also be ensuring that we provide the appropriate training for existing and newly appointed staff and that all services meet legislative requirements.

Patch News

Bridgend

Three gents moved into their own flats at the beginning of March following intensive planning with them and their families.

They are supported by a core group of staff who have the right knowledge and skills to ensure the success of the project. OHT was asked to provide the support due to our experience and proven track record in providing Autism specific services.

Bridgend Council is leading a group looking at how services will develop in the area in the future. A stakeholder conference was held in November 2006 and this recognised that there is a need for services for people with learning disabilities in the Borough to be re-organised in such a way as to meet the needs of more people, to improve the satisfaction of existing users of services and to operate within tight financial constraints. The conference also identified three aims for service development, namely:

- i. to maximise people's independence
- ii. to maximise use of local supports and opportunities
- iii. to maximise the benefits of working in partnership

Vale

The team in the Vale patch would like to extend a thank you to Steve Cox and all the directors' management team for the extraordinary amount of work they have carried out recently in relation to the re-tender process in Cardiff and the Vale. We know that a huge amount of extra hours have been put in and there have been many late nights and weekends. We don't want it to go unnoticed and so would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you – you know who you are!

Cardiff 1

Two of our service users from different homes are taking a trip to London together to see a show.

More details being sent through from Jo/ Tracey (02920 236216)