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www.oht.org.uk

the grapevine

Opportunity Housing Trust 20 years of changing lives

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



Andy Johnson, IT and Administration Services Director

What do you like most about your job? The variety! I never know what is going to happen from one day to the next. Working in our environment, I probably get more opportunities than a lot of people who have an IT job.

Which three words describe you best? Happy, conscientious and enthusiastic.

If you had a time machine, which period of time would you travel to and why? I'd go forward. It's a terrible thing to admit, but I'm a bit of a trekky. Beam me up Scotty!

If you were marooned on a desert island, who or what would you take with you? I'd take my sand wedge (golf club) for plenty of bunker practice, a tray of coke and a hat.

What is your favourite childhood memory? We used to have some fantastic family holidays in Tenby. Loads of us used to gather in a big house. They were great times.

Top tips for doing the job well... Drink lots of coke and don't let anything phase you!

Damien McCann, Assistant Support Services Director

What do you like most about your job? For me, it's the rewards as you see people develop and move on. This can be staff as well as service users.

Which three words describe you best? Shy, honest and committed.

If you had a time machine, which period of time would you travel to and why? I'd go forward. I'd love to see how technology had changed the world in say 100 years time.

If you were marooned on a desert island, who or what would you take with you? A football, a gallon of extra cold Guinness and a sun hat!

What is your favourite childhood memory? Playing football in the street as a child when I was growing up in Derry, Northern Ireland.

There'd be loads of us out on the summer evenings, until it grew dark. It was safe and the roads were quiet which meant we had hours of uninterrupted football.

Top tips for doing the job well... Keep calm, don't judge and be a master at time management.

Rhian Jones, Service Quality Director

What do you like most about your job? It's got to be the people and the variety – every day is different.

Which three words describe you best? Contented, enthusiastic and focused.

If you had a time machine, which period of time would you travel to and why? I'd visit the prehistoric age to see the dinosaurs. I could come back then and tell my dinosaur-mad kids all about them!

If you were marooned on a desert island, who or what would you take with you? My family, my guitar and my ipod collection!

What is your favourite childhood memory? Holidays in the South of France with friends and family – most of which were spent on the beach.

Top tips for doing the job well... Be honest and stay true to what you believe in.

Liz Corscadden, Support Services Director

What do you like most about your job? Being able to make things happen (not all the time though) to make things better for the people we support.

Which three words describe you best? Impatient, demanding and definitely alive!

If you had a time machine, which period of time would you travel to and why? I never want to go back in time but I have a fascination with the period around World War II. It's something about how people cared for total strangers and how everyone contributed to winning.

If you were marooned on a desert island, who or what would you take with you? A beach BBQ would be sizzling with shell fish dripping in garlic and FLOYD tending to it, shouting banter back and forth to Billy Conolly who is perched on his very shiny trike!!!! That's my bliss and I can't tell you the rest.

What is your favourite childhood memory? It's more of a happy period when all my older brothers lived at home in Belfast. Must be about being the little sister and having them to look out for me, ahhh!

Top tips for doing the job well... If one of my brothers needed support I know what standard I'd want. This isn't as hard as it sounds. It's all about treating people with respect, nothing more and nothing less.

Welcome to the West

We're delighted to welcome on board our new staff, service users and families in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion.

Earlier this year we were invited by the local authorities in the two areas to tender for the provision of services in their region – outside our traditional operating areas of Cardiff, the Vale and the Valleys. Following interviews and presentations, we were offered a number of schemes in both areas.

We'd like to thank everyone involved with us in these areas in helping to make the transition to OHT a success.

Highlights of our first few months

include the opening of fully functioning offices in Aberystwyth and Haverfordwest, the appointment of staff and also the opportunity to meet with and get to know the service users and their families.

Chief executive of OHT, Steve Cox, said: "Having built up a reputation in South Wales as an excellent, supportive and professional provider, it is important that we now invest time, energy and resources into these new areas to start earning the same reputation.

"It has been a very rewarding time for all of us involved in the process and we look forward to going from strength to strength in the area."

The new office addresses are:

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Congratulations!

Things are looking good for five of the OHT staff who've been short listed by the judges of the Wales Care Awards, organised by Care Forum Wales.

Sally Haddock and Sandra Jones have been short listed for the domiciliary care practitioner award; while Kim Powell and Deborah Lawrence are up for domiciliary care registered manager. Rachel Reeves is in the running for outstanding service.

They will now meet for a face-to-face interview with the Care Forum Wales judges in Cardiff. Shortly

after we will hear if they have made it to the grand final which will take place in November with the Minister for Health and Social Services, Dr Brian Gibbons, AM.

We're also hoping to hear if three members of staff have made it through to the Cardiff and Vale Parents Federation's Understanding Disability Awards.

Jay McCabe (support team manager), John Greedy (support worker) and Linda Bingham, (support worker) have all been nominated by us. Once again, judging takes place in July. Good luck to you all!



Sally Haddock is one of a number of OHT staff being interviewed for the Wales Care Awards.

GOT A STORY? If you have a story that you'd like to see in The Grapevine, please contact Paula Abbandonato on **029 2073 3526** or email paula@vibemail.co.uk

Workshops have done wonders



Deb Gould

Deb Gould, who has been heavily involved in the workshops, explains: "For some time, we've involved service users in the recruitment of new staff. Everything we were doing was working pretty well and we were getting good feedback from all corners."

"So much so, that we decided to formalise the process and develop a series of workshops which would equip service users with the skills and the knowledge to make a direct contribution to the recruitment process."

While a number of providers across the UK will also ask for a contribution from service users when they employ staff, we think we are one of the first to actually formalise the process.

Deb said: "We're now running a series of three workshops with service users to take them through all aspects of an interview. We start with flip charts and question and answer sessions before moving on to role play and working with score sheets."

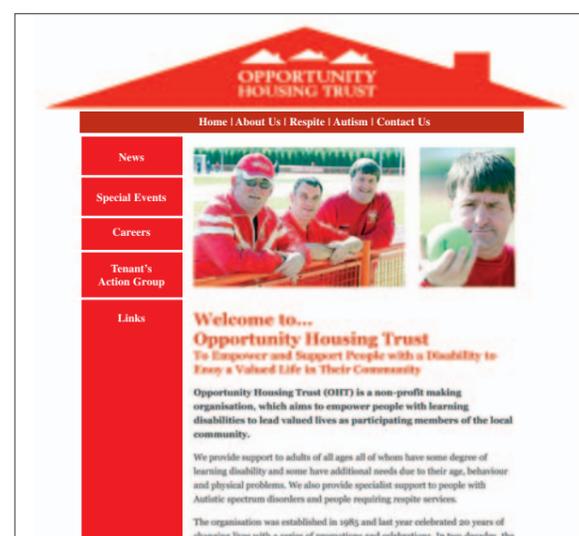
To date around 24 service users have taken part in the process which has led to the appointment of a number of key staff.

For Maria Sweetman, a service user in Cardiff, the experience has been a positive one. She said: "It was good and I enjoyed it. I would like to do it again."

A series of staff recruitment workshops for service users have helped OHT win an enviable position at the recent Tenants Participation Awards.

Web news

Improved communications is a key part of our strategy for the forthcoming year so we've invested in a new look website which will go live in July for all to see. The site is very colourful and informative and will be updated frequently with OHT news and special events. Please log on to www.oht.org.uk and let us know what you think.



It's party time!

So many people had such a good time at the staff parties last year that we're doing something similar again.

Dates for the diary are:

- Cardiff/Vale/Valleys** - August/September
- Pembrokeshire** - November
- Ceredigion** - November

For a small donation of £3 at the door, food and music will be provided and if last year is anything to go by a good time will be had by all.



The ride of his life!

After thinking about it for years, our chief executive Steve Cox finally did it – he jumped on his bike and rode 100 miles a day over eight days from John O'Groats to Lands End – all in the name of charity!

To complete the 880-mile solo journey from Scotland's most northern point to the tip of Cornwall had been a dream of Steve's for many years.

He explains: "Most people know I'm a keen cyclist and while I've done many long and challenging rides, this one had eluded me up until now. The thought of taking a week away from the family and work had always held me back. This year, with the children older and more independent, I thought it was time I gave it a go."

Steve travelled with his bike to Scotland by train, and then averaged around 110 miles a day on the journey south. He'd hit the road around 9am after breakfast and finish cycling about 5pm and book into a bed and breakfast before heading out for the next stretch.

He said: "The weather was pretty good to me which helped. Ironically the first day was the hardest. The rain was pouring and the wind was strong and blowing into my face most of the time. I really thought that if it kept up like that for a couple of days I'd struggle. Luckily, after that, the sun shone and it became a lot easier. I didn't fall off once, only had one puncture and didn't get lost at all!"

The £2,000 Steve raised from the ride will go to Pedal Power and the ME Research Group.

This is how he did it:

- Day 1 – John O'Groats to Inverness
- Day 2 – Inverness to Perth
- Day 3 – Perth to Lockerbie
- Day 4 – Lockerbie to Preston
- Day 5 – Preston to Bridgenorth
- Day 6 – Bridgenorth to Bristol
- Day 7 – Bristol to Launceston
- Day 8 – Launceston to Land's End

If you're an employee of OHT and have a story you'd like to see in The Grapevine, please contact Paula Abbandonato on Cardiff 029 2073 3526 or email paula@vibemail.co.uk



Steve Cox pictured at Land's End (left) and John O'Groats (right)





A shining inspection report...

We were really pleased to receive excellent reports following our respite and domiciliary care agency inspections in the spring.

The inspectors visited our service users and gave questionnaires out to them as well as a number of our staff and case managers. Two of the inspectors also spent a couple of days at our Llanishen office and also paid a visit to Partridge Road and Pantbach Avenue.

During the visits, they studied information relating to staff and service users as well as our policies and procedures. We were given feedback on the process verbally and also received two written reports on their findings. Particular comment was made on the positive cooperation from everyone and the quality of information presented, so many thanks to all involved.

Here's a taste of what they said...

“ OHT has relevant policies and procedures in place that are reviewed and amended as required. QA systems are also in place ”



“ It was clear from the training records and other information examined that staff receive training appropriate to the needs of the service users ”



“ OHT promotes service user involvement in policy review and staff recruitment processes ”

“ Through observation and discussion it was evident that staff treat service users with respect and dignity ”



“ It was evident from the self assurance documentation and through discussion with the registered persons that they are committed to maintaining and improving standards and quality of care ”

“ Commendably OHT is very aware of the need to consult with service users and their representatives and has developed a variety of systems to facilitate this, and for reviewing the quality of the service and the care provided ”



“ Service users are supported to make decision and maximise their independence ”

Some of the key areas for attention that they highlighted were:
Maintaining the correct level of paperwork
Differentiating between which records should be stored either in houses or offices
Making sure signatures and dates are properly recorded on relevant documents
Continuing to make sure care plans are up to date
Making information for new staff coming on shift is easily accessible
Clarifying the requirements for retention of CRB check information with CSIW (as the guidance from the Care Standards Regulations differs to those of the Criminal Records Bureau)



Office Moves:

OHT's offices in Canton are no longer suitable from a disability access and size point of view. As a result we have been looking for suitable alternatives for some months.

A number of options we considered were unsuitable for a variety of reasons e.g. parking, access, size, cost etc.

At the same time we became aware that the upstairs offices at Fairoak were available and after discussion with the landlord OHT has been able to purchase the whole of the office block at Fairoak Road. Staff currently working in Canton

will move into Fairoak at the end of the summer.

You may not know but OHT only owned the ground floor at Fairoak and rented one half of the first floor accommodation. By purchasing the upstairs we have secured our tenancy of the previously rented part as well as giving us offices for the West patch.

The purchase has been done with a mortgage paid for by the fact that we no longer have to pay rent for the upstairs at Fairoak and the Canton office.

The plan now is to meet with relevant staff to discuss how best to make use of the resource we now have. This will include discussion through our TP worker on issues for service users.

STAFF SURVEY



In 2004 OHT along with a number of other similar organisations participated in a survey to ask staff their opinions of the organisation they worked for. This information was used to assist us in identifying key actions in our Business Plan.

We will be undertaking a similar survey this autumn and shortly survey forms will be circulated to all staff via their managers.

It is vital that people complete and return these forms as we value your opinions and this gives you the opportunity of having a say in what we need to do to improve the way we work and how it affects you.

The latest on funding...

Many of you will know that as a voluntary organisation, we receive much of our funding from grants/contracts with local authorities. Each year they decide how much they will give us for inflation and over the years these settlements have always been low.

Last year we hoped we might be able to pay a one off bonus to staff at the end of the year, but this was not possible due to the difficult budget position our funding put us in.

This year the messages from LA's about how much they will give us are again indicating a very low level, of increase if anything. Trustees and senior managers are working on our budget position as the information comes in. Discussions will take place shortly with Unison representatives.

Patch News

There are 14 patches under the OHT umbrella. We'll be talking to a number of them in every edition of The Grapevine to let you know what is going on locally...

Cardiff 1

Jo Lawson at Cardiff 1 has been working to improve the profile of OHT's respite service. Very shortly, the division will launch a new OHT Respite information leaflet which will be available in hard copy. It can also be seen on www.oht.org.uk

This summer a Respite Grapevine will also be produced which will be the first in a series of quarterly newsletters providing information about the service to other OHT staff, families, service users and local authorities. This will also be available online at our website.



Cardiff 5

Karen Rowley and the team at Cardiff 5 are concentrating on preparations for the annual service users conference, which will take place this year at the Millennium Centre.

The stand they will be putting together will have a sports focus. Karen explains: "I think it's just a coincidence that we have so many service users from our patch who are interested in sport. Whatever the reason, the benefits of enjoying some sort of sport during the week has clear benefits for service users and staff alike."

As well as adding variety to the lifestyle of service users, there are other reasons to consider taking up a sport.

She added: "Obviously there's the chance to keep fit and healthy, but there's also great comradery between players. There's also a huge sense of achievement and fulfilment in any sport whatever your level."

Karen's stand at the conference will be promoting sport generally for OHT service users and staff, with books literature, posters and leaflets. The patch has also met with the Sports Disability Officer for Wales, Joanna Coates, who has guided them on the best way forward.

"Obviously there's the chance to keep fit and healthy, but there's also great comradery between players. There's also a huge sense of achievement and fulfilment in any sport whatever your level." Karen Rowley



The Vale

Plenty has been going on in the Vale too. Three staff have obtained their Registered Managers award, Anita Bowen, Lynda McKenzie and Gwyn Lewis. With just one unit to go, Wanda Jeans won't be far behind in completing her award too.

We also need to welcome on board a few new names: Griffin Close has a new assistant manager, Linda Montgomery (otherwise known as Monty); Morningside Walk has a new manager – Tracy Thomas.

We're also delighted that Debbie Saint has had confirmation that she'll be moving shortly to a more suitable property. We wish you all the best Debbie in your bungalow in Dina Powys. Congratulations also to Rob Eaves who has been supported by us and now has found himself a job at the Amelia Trust Farm and also a local café. From all of us in the Vale, we really hope it works out well for you Rob.

Bridgend

Jan Grady, admin officer in Bridgend, has taken part once again in the Race for Life at Cardiff's Bute Park in June. Jan, along with her sister, Gill, raised £65 for Cancer Research and completed the 5k course in just over an hour.

She said: "We walked the course but came home with our best time ever."

Service user John Cassidy, also enjoyed a day to remember this month when he along with his support worker, Paul Thomas, spent a day out on the Orient Express. The duo travelled from Newport to Bath and then the Seven Estuary before returning home.