



## Care Employer Award

Is it too late still to wish you all a Happy New Year? Although, given the current weather conditions it might already be a difficult start for some.

As you may have seen from the Care Services article in the In Touch magazine, we were runner up regional finalists in the South East Great British Care Awards, and I am proud to include here a photograph of our lovely trophy, collected at the Gala Awards Ceremony in Brighton.

We were naturally very excited, this being our very first taste of external recognition for the work we do and the quality of our services. However, just as we thought it was time to put

away the glad rags, the Care Awards have been back in touch to advise us our entry was so strong that we have automatically been put through to the National Finalist Awards. Interviews are due to take place on

Wednesday 12th March, with a new judging panel and presentations are lined up for Saturday 26th April.

Watch out for the next Quarterly edition for an update on the results.



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## CQC Inspections



We are pleased to report that all our registered locations have received their CQC inspections and are fully compliant.

quality services in what has been a difficult last year following on from the restructure and continued cuts from Local Authorities.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all the teams for their patience and understanding and continued promotion of good



CQC put our homes under the spotlight



## Strategic Commissioning Accommodation Solutions Update

You will recall from my report in October's newsletter that KCC were undertaking a review of all residential accommodation in Kent. As predicted, KCC have now advised providers there is to be a residential re-let this year.

At present the focus is on residential care for older people, and providers in that sector have been advised the process to tender for services begins in March. We are

aware that residential care for Learning Disability will be taken up in due course but wait to hear the exact timeline.

In the meantime Mark Lobban, Director of Strategic Commissioning for KCC, and Christy Holden who heads up the Strategic Commissioning Accommodation Solutions team, met with Gill Gibb and myself to obtain knowledge and an understanding of how we provide quality services.

To us it was clear that KCC do not have a strategy ready to implement for Learning Disability services and I had a sense that both Mark and Christy (both taking copious notes) will use some elements of COT strategic planning to implement theirs (Let's hope!)



*"We should brace ourselves for further cuts in funding"*

## Residential Re-let

Following on the theme of impending notice of the planned residential re-let timetable, we feel that we should brace ourselves for the further cuts in funding this will inevitably bring.

Whilst at this stage we have no further detail of what those cuts might be, we are already beginning to look at how we might

counteract the funding reductions to come.

Various options have been tabled and discussed by Trustees and the senior management team. At this stage more in depth work will be needed in order to test out whether any or each of these options would be deemed a viable solution, but by

putting that investigative work in train now, we do at least hope to be some way down the road to preparedness by the time the Authority is ready to reveal the depth of savings they are seeking.

## Wills, Trusts & Legacies Workshop

Something we often get asked by parents is for advice regarding financial arrangements for their son or daughter when they are no longer around..

This obviously is not an area of expertise for the Trust, but we do have some contacts at Brachers Solicitors who have previously been kind enough to provide infor-

mation around Wills, Trusts, and legacies. In the light of parental interest in the subject, I am contemplating the possibility of running a workshop in either late Spring or early Summer and inviting parents along to discuss legal implications for their relatives after the inevitable happens..

I would be very interested in hearing from any parents who

might like to take part in this forum, and who may already have had some experience in the field of long term planning for their sons and daughters, which they could share with others. If so, please contact either myself (Fiona Dodge) or Carol Senior on 01233 860622

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# The COT Group

One of the things I most passionately believe in is that the people who use our services should have a say in how the organisation moves forward and how we improve our quality..

Reading the minutes of the newly re-formed Residents/Tenants Panel actually brought a tear to my eye. Not only was it fantastic to see that the panel had attracted twelve new members, had nominated Thomas Woolgrove to be their Chairman and Catherine Henwood their Vice Chairman,

and decided to call themselves 'The COT Group', but that it was evident they are already getting their teeth into some real issues.

A plea from Angela Phipps of Fundraising, for help with planning next year's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations had obviously gone down well because no less than eight of the panel volunteered their services. The group have already agreed to undertake a review of paperwork including Review Notes, Care Plans and Quality Assurance Forms, and aim to start

that process at their next meeting in April.

What was also remarkable was the number of comments and brilliant ideas coming out of this forum, including suggestions for traffic calming measures at the front of the farm, improvements to signage, and means of overcoming mobility difficulties in the car park. Frankly, I can't wait to see what the next meeting brings. It is clear that our residents and tenants intend to keep us all on our toes.



**“Expanding horizons to be the challenge for our new Work & Employment Co-ordinator”**

## Life Skills “evolving all the time”

The Life Skills Projects have been working hard supporting people to gain new skills and recognized qualifications, and this has proved very successful. Many City & Guilds awards have been presented over the last 3-4 years in particular. Some people have moved on to voluntary work, some have gained work experience placements and one person had a small paid job for a short period. Although this was not for long, it was clear this was something we had to develop in order to support the growing number of people who aspire to gain useful work and employment in the community.

With enormous help from our Fundraising Department (Angela Phipps), we have been able to

access the funding to enable the Trust to employ a Work & Employment Co-ordinator—someone who will be tasked to help residents, tenants, and external placements to look, identify, and pursue work experience and paid employment in the local com-



munity, where individual skills, qualifications and experience will allow new opportunities to expand peoples working horizons, earn a wage.....finally, employment!!

We hope to have this person in post by April and we want to start moving people further forward over the next few months. The challenge is to make this a reality. We will be putting into place new pre-work training to support this transition happening effectively, and ensuring all the courses completed, vocational skills, and training will be on the basis of new life-enhancing opportunities.

The way care services are supported and provided is constantly changing and evolving and this is a positive future development that the Trust is committed to supporting.

Andy Ford—Life Skills