

CASE STUDY



Background

Size: 22 employees

Sector: Care

Location: Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Status: Recognised since 2005

The Organisation

Mount Ephraim House is a residential care home for elderly people. They have used the Investors in People framework to help them get through a difficult year of organisational change.



Change for the Better

Successfully steering an organisation through a period of change can be a challenge but with the help of Investors in People, care home manager Karen Cooper has done just that.

When Karen arrived at residential care home Mount Ephraim House in November 2007, the organisation had a number of problems including a lack of trained staff, records that were not being kept and care practice requirements not being met.

Based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, Mount Ephraim House is home to 38 elderly residents. The home,

which is managed by Greensleeves Homes Trust, first achieved Investors in People in 2005.

Investors in People provides a framework for continuous improvement and is practical, flexible and easy to use for organisations of any size and from any sector.

Karen Cooper explained: "I had



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KAREN COOPER
MOUNT EPHRAIM HOUSE

never experienced Investors in People before coming to Mount Ephraim but I was encouraged to continue the process and now I'm glad I did. We had experienced a very difficult year with an enormous amount of changes taking place so when it came to our assessment in November 2008, I didn't think we would achieve the Standard but I'm delighted that we did!"

All Change

One of Karen's first tasks was to persuade the staff that the home was not running as it should be. Many of them had worked there a long time and found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that they were not keeping up with current care practices. The home's quality rating had dropped and Karen had to look at changing the skill mix of the staffing structure.

"I wanted to make sure that we had staff on board that would match the ethos and values of the company," continued Karen. "We had to go through a long period where we were under-resourced and were relying on agency staff, but because we waited and recruited the right people they are now contributing to making Mount Ephraim a better place."

Taking Advice

Mount Ephraim House had several visits from Derek Milliner, an Adviser from Quality South East, the Investors in People centre for the region.

Derek Milliner said: "Although the home was going through a difficult time, it also had some good practices in place. Another home that is managed by Greensleeves

Homes Trust had just achieved Investors in People so Karen was able to draw on their experience. She could see the practical applications of the Standard in use and replicate existing practices within the organisation."

The staff completed an Investors in People survey which provided Karen with some useful guidance. "I was pleasantly surprised by the results," said Karen. "Although the staff weren't necessarily happy about the changes being made, they understood why they had to happen and thought it was the best way forward for the organisation."

Over the years, staff training had lapsed at Mount Ephraim but with the help of Investors in People, Karen was able to reintroduce a programme of training that is compulsory within the care sector. All staff are now working towards or have achieved NVQ Level 2 with some employees on Level 3. A more comprehensive induction programme for staff has also been introduced.

A new management structure has been implemented with a long serving member of staff being promoted to deputy manager and a senior care team now in place. Regular staff meetings are held to keep everyone informed within the home and also to allow employees to develop and be involved in any decisions being taken by the management team.

Sense of Achievement

Karen concluded: "Investors in People has helped to give me a good perspective on how far we have come in the last year. Instead

of thinking about all the drastic changes we have had to make and not realising the benefits, we have gained a sense of achievement."

Mount Ephraim House is now rated as 'good' by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) but Karen is determined to raise it to 'excellent'. A programme of investment and refurbishment is on going but to date has included new carpets, furniture, decoration, a wide screen television and even a Wii - the interactive games console - to keep the residents fit and active. All of which make the home "a better environment to work in," according to Karen.

"We had to help staff understand that the residents need to be entertained. It was a real culture shock for them but we have employed an activities co-ordinator and recently held a 'race night' in our lounge. It was so successful that some of the residents now want to go to the races for real!"

Derek Milliner added: "I take my hat off to Karen as she was the person who drove the Investors in People process forward and made sure that everything happened effectively. A lot of companies go through redundancies but it is how you communicate with existing staff that is really important and can make a difference to the success or failure of an organisation."