



STROUD LIFE BUSINESS AWARDS

OPENhouse were the proud winners of the Contribution to the Community Award at the 2015 Stroud Life Business Awards. OPENhouse has established an expertise in transitional person centred, supported living services, enabling marginalised individuals to move from a position of social isolation and disadvantage to one of active participation within their local community. This accolade is reflective of the external recognition OPENhouse has gained for our unswerving dedication to providing support, opportunities and direction to each of the individuals we work with.



CREATIVE LEARNING.



OPENhouse's education department are pleased to announce they have had another successful cohort of students leaving them ready to take their next step of their education or employment journey. Jan Foreman (Education Manager) said 'we are exceptionally proud of our students' successes this year. **All of our students are leaving with at least one qualification, with most of them choosing to stay in education for at least another six months**'. Niki Ho (Director of The Bizz Charity) said 'Open House understand that young people do not fit into boxes and they really work hard to provide the best support for each individual'.

OPENHOUSE FOOTBALL TEAM



Once again OPENhouse fielded a strong side in the now annual CCP Charity Shield Five-a-side Football Tournament, held in Waterwells on Thursday 16th July 2015.

We knew how motivated the team were when two of them arrived an hour and a half ahead of time at 7.30am!

On the pitch, the team made our player manager, Dale Millar proud, not just with some strong performances (0-0 to our biggest threat, a combined Stroud and Cheltenham CCP team; and beating Aspire 5-0), but also by showing the tactical skill and determination to perform well as a team - no doubt learnt through their Tuesday night training sessions with Sofab Sports' Chris Rawlins.

They played some inspired football against stronger opposition and, despite unlucky deflections, maintained their composure superbly in the face of defeat.

No place in the Final this year, lads; but we are all exceptionally proud of how well you represented OPENhouse

Well Done!



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WHAT OUR SERVICE USERS SAY

I came to Delmont's Lot when it started its current set up ie: flats for adults who needed 24 hour support. I have complex mental illness including a severe and enduring eating disorder, chronic anxiety and I also have Asperger's. I wasn't diagnosed with Asperger's until I was 24 and three years later it's still a challenge to get my head around what this means and its impact on my life so far. Growing up believing that you are simply bad and weird, on top of being too intense, too precocious and socially awkward sowed the seeds for the adult I am now and the problems I have.

For the first time since I left home I love where I live, truly love where I live. I live in my own flat which is slowly going from chaos to being more ordered and more personal. Less cluttered, less over stimulating. I do a large amount of the gardening, I garden bare footed which as far as I am concerned is the way to garden. I love gardening, I never thought I would...I love the process, I love the time and I love the grounding effect that it has. I feel connected, I feel one and I didn't think I could feel that way. I love the colour, the smells, the feeling of the ground and the textures of the herbs. It is soothing, it is therapeutic and it is slow. For someone who is often manically busy, slow isn't normal but it is in the garden and I love it for that.

Whilst all of us who live here hold a lot of pain as we make it through the days, there is something strong, holding about OPENhouse.

One of my support workers wrote this to me on a particularly bad day in response to me writing:
"A big part of me wants to self-destruct...I'm losing hope...I don't see the future as possible...I don't see how to keep going."

Support worker wrote back to me:

"While there is breath in your body there is HOPE. Let us hold the belief and hope for you because we believe in you!"

Having someone there is important, knowing you have an entire team behind you is something truly special. There is often a family feel around here, we've got bonds with each other, all individual to the connection between those two individuals. For many of us it's the first experience of this kind of thing, we are learning, we are trying to learn how to balance friendships and taking tentative steps into the world that many of us feel we may never truly be part of. OPENhouse works with that and slowly challenges those of us who feel we may always be social outsiders...little things like going for a coffee or going for a little trip to Nailsworth can be incredibly challenging to us all and all in different ways. However, gentle support and individual help makes all the difference and makes these things not only possible but successful as well. Tentative steps that most take for granted in their daily lives can be truly huge steps for us, but the achievement is equal and well worth it.

We also have a lot of laughs, staff falling up the stairs, turning everything in flat five upside down (literally) on a very dismal cold winter's day during the Monday staff meeting. Endless jigsaw puzzles that I become manically fixated upon (I do love a jigsaw puzzle), word searches, Sudoku that a certain member of Delmont's is able to do upside down and beat everyone hands down. Water fights during ludicrously sticky days, barbecues, swing ball...stupidity and laughter is massively important and something that makes life survivable. A great release and a regular activity at Delmont's taken part by staff and service users alike.

