

# **Shire Training Workshops t/a OPENhouse**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**5.00pm, Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**The Hall, The British School, Stroud**

**Number of attendees: 56 (21 members / 35 non-members and service users)**

### **1. Welcome by the Chair**

The Chairman, Richard Brinton welcomed Members, Trustees, Service Users and Crow Clark Whitehill Auditors to the meeting. He said he was pleased to see such a good turn-out for the AGM.

Richard said it felt appropriate for the AGM to coincide with season of Michaelmas. This was a time of year when Nature was preparing itself for a cold and dark period ahead by laying down seeds in readiness for the following Spring. He said humans also go through dark times and, as in nature, it is then a matter of finding the strength to get through to a new and better period ahead. This was a reflection of the spirit found at OPENhouse where the aim was to form relationships and through these to then discover the spark each individual has and use this to enable them to build brighter futures. As an expression and recognition of this spark, Richard noted that there would be more time given in this AGM to contributions from service users themselves. Their accounts not just of their struggles, but importantly working through them to achievements, were something to recognise and celebrate together.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Alasdair Gordon, Bernard Jarman, Martin Large, Deborah Leah, Rob Mehta and Marie Waring.

### **3. Approval of 2015 AGM Minutes**

It was proposed that the Minutes of the 2015 AGM be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**Proposed:** Crockett Cresswell                      **Seconded:** Nicki Severs

The proposal was agreed unanimously by those members present.

### **4. Presentation of Trustees' Reports for 2015/16**

#### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Richard Brinton briefly gave a strategic overview of OPENhouse in which he described the charity's origins and purpose in providing housing, education and complex needs support for young homeless people and vulnerable individuals. The underpinning aim is to effectively facilitate the transition of

individuals from a position of vulnerability and dependency to living as fully functioning lives as they have the capacity to do so.

Richard said the Trustees have continued to carry out their governance role very seriously and in line with the Charity Commissioners' guidelines and the growing complexity of the charity's activities. The Trustees meet on a monthly basis. In addition to formal meetings, each Trustee takes on a relevant area of responsibility in line with the skills and expertise which they bring to the Board.

Between monthly meetings, each Trustee is dedicated to support an appropriate department/staff member. This can take the form of a formal meeting, providing specialist information or just an informal information gathering visit.

Richard then invited Chloe to speak about her experiences at OPENhouse. Chloe said he had been diagnosed with Asperger's four years ago and her life had contained lots of ups and downs. She had recently spent a period in hospital and thanked everyone for the care everyone had shown her. She was particularly grateful for all the cards, texts and emails she had received while in hospital. While at Delmont's Lot, her great joy has been the garden. She has been given responsibility for part of the budget for the garden and has helped with the planning what to plant. She was now planning the garden for next year. All this helped her feel she now has many more positive things to look forward to in life.

### **Education**

As Deborah Leah was unable to attend the AGM, Richard presented the Education overview for 2015/16. He said the OPENhouse education department provides education and training opportunities for young people from 14 years old who have not succeeded in a statutory education environment. This could be for a number of reasons, including: Exclusion from school and/or alternative learning centres; youth offending; community rehabilitation; health; inappropriate behaviour or homelessness. Activities involve creative learning (such as performing in the recording studio, making a canoe in the creative workshop or sessions in the community kitchen, all with very small ratios with tutors (up to 1:4 maximum).

Richard said our experience of working with this group of students has highlighted that the fundamental components necessary to underpin/ensure effective OPENhouse's education delivery include:

- Qualified teaching staff who are also trained to work with individuals with complex needs.
- Ratios must be small (ideally no more than 1:4) and part of their support will involve 1:1 to ensure that individuals get the most appropriate support.
- Each tutor works with the students to design their own learning journey plan and students are able to work at their own pace.
- Students are supported to positively progress at their own pace and not forced to move on by an external timeframe.

This has resulted in very encouraging positive progression rates onto further education or employment. Last year this was 86%; the remaining 14% stayed with OPENhouse and have now moved on positively.

David then spoke about his educational experiences at OPENhouse. He said he had developed skills in leatherwork and passed around several items he had made by hand. He said he took pride in his achievements at OPENhouse and thanked Jeannie for all her help.

### **Housing and Support**

Nicki Severs presented the report for the Housing Support Department. She said OPENhouse has a contract to deliver 16 places in housing based support to 16-25 year olds. The aim of the service is to provide not only housing but also life skills, education, training and access to employment opportunities.

Support workers work with the young people to actualise their potential, enabling them to make a positive contribution to the community rather than living a life of dependency. To do this effectively necessitates suitably qualified staff, detailed support planning, weekly support sessions, monthly reviews and collaboration with education providers and potential employers.

Between April 2015 and March 2016 OPENhouse has had a total of nine positive move-ons. Of these:

- Two people progressed into private accommodation and are in full time employment.
- Two were reconnected with their families (and are still living in the family home at the time of writing). One is in part-time employment and the other works full time.
- Four moved into council owned properties and continue to do well living independently.
- One young person transitioned to another supported housing provider and is currently in full time employment.

Louis spoke about his time in supported accommodation at OPENhouse. He said he had now been with OPENhouse for almost three months and had made a number of new good friends since his arrival. He had recently succeeded in getting a job and would be starting work shortly. He said he was grateful for the help and opportunities he had been given while at OPENhouse. This was all helping him to sort out his life and move on positively.

### **Enhanced Support Service**

Jem Sweet presented a report for the Enhanced Support Department. He said OPENhouse provided Housing and Complex Mental Health Support for individuals with lifelong complex conditions. These are individuals who risk a life of being in and out of institutions. We provide a “micro community” within which they develop their ability to manage their diagnosed needs to the best of their capacity by supporting individuals to live a stable life in the wider community.

OPENhouse draws on the expertise of the staff in the Enhanced Support Department to effectively transition individuals with highly complex needs to increased levels of independence. This transition has key stages:

- Move into a shared flat in shared accommodation with 24 hour staffing (with a night worker sleeping in the shared flat).
- Moving out of the shared flat into a small independent flat at Delmont's Lot.
- Moving out of the small independent flat into a larger independent flat at Delmont's Lot.
- Moving out of Delmont's Lot into accommodation in the community with floating support.

And ultimately,

- Moving into private or council owned property with Support Workers providing bespoke floating support for individuals with complex needs to live a fully functioning life in the community.

Natalie said that, since arriving at OPENhouse, she had made friends at Delmont's Lot and this had helped her a great deal. She wouldn't be where she is today without her friendship with Lindsey.

Josh said his life had improved over the 18 months he has been at Delmont's Lot and was grateful for the support he has received. He was hoping to transfer to floating support soon and with a part time job in Gloucester.

### **Staff, Service Users and the OPENhouse Community**

Andy Waring described the relationship between staff, service users and the OPENhouse Community

#### **a) The fundamental importance of staff**

Whilst OPENhouse is an incredibly rewarding and stimulating place to work it also presents a variety of challenges. As the organisation continues to grow it is essential that the staff are appointed through rigorous safer recruitment and induction procedures, and are appropriately supported and trained. It is fundamental that there is a resilient, fit for purpose, conscientious and dedicated staff team underpinning the work of the organisation and most importantly supporting the individuals we work with to the very highest quality. This is addressed through three independent yet interdependent components of effective team work and delivery: Safer Recruitment; Staff Training; and Staff Wellbeing.

#### **b) The Importance of the Service Users' Wellbeing**

Service users' wellbeing is the starting point for our engagement and support. There is a direct correlation between emotional wellbeing and cognitive capacity. It is essential that the appropriate amount of time and support is given to nurture individuals' wellbeing. There are a variety of ways in which this happens ranging from bespoke individual support, to sharing meal times, to going on bike rides together, to having a film club or being part of the OPENhouse football team.

The heightened focus on wellbeing contributes to the creation of a community atmosphere throughout the OPENhouse properties. This can be demonstrated through a variety of ways including breakfasts in the community kitchen, 'OPEN lunches', in our creative learning workshops, cookery lessons, gardening sessions, group rambles, trips and sporting activities. It is through these regular social interactions and peer support opportunities in addition to 1:1 support sessions that individuals are effectively supported to transition towards a more independent lifestyle.

Marcus spoke about the success of the OPENhouse football team. The team plays once a week in either Bristol or Gloucester. The players have become much fitter and enjoy being together. The team won the championship last season and was now looking forward to defending their title. He thanked everyone at OPENhouse for their support.

The Trustees' presentations finished with a video put together by Rob Evans showing Josh and some of the maintenance activities he has been involved with as part of his support at OPENhouse.

#### **5. Presentation of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016**

The Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016 were presented by the Finance Officer, Robyn Calloway. She gave a summary of the main points in the accounts for the year.

The Chairman thanked the Auditor, Guy Biggin of Crow Clark Whitehill, for his thoroughness and attention to detail during the audit and invited questions from the members present on the accounts. None were forthcoming.

The Chairman then proposed the following **Resolution**:

**To adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.**

**Proposed:** Any Warner                      **Seconded:** Jem Sweet

On being put to the vote, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

Guy Biggin left the AGM at 5.55pm.

#### **6. Submitted Questions and Answers**

Members had been invited to submit questions which would be answered at the AGM. No written questions had been received. Richard opened up the chance to ask questions to those present. None were forthcoming.

#### **7. Resignation from the Board**

The Chairman said it was with regret that he had received the resignation of Crockett Cresswell as a Trustee. Crockett's resignation was understandable as he has recently moved away from the area. The Chairman thanked Crockett for coming to the AGM and for his service during his time as a member of the OPENhouse Board.

#### **8. Appointment of Auditors**

The Chairman said the Board of Trustees recommended that Crow Clark Whitehill LLP be re-appointed as auditors for SWT until the next AGM. He proposed the following **Resolution**:

**To confirm the appointment of Crow Clark Whitehill LLP as auditors for SWT until the end of the next AGM.**

**Proposed:** Jan Foreman                      **Seconded:** Tara Lupton

On being put to the vote, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

## 9. CEO's Report

Claire Mould thanked everyone for attending the AGM including parents, ex-Trustees and ex-members of staff. She reminded everyone that OPENhouse provided a 24 hour 365 day service and she was particularly grateful to those members of staff who had come along despite working shifts. She expressed her heartfelt thanks for the participation of service users and for those who had shared their stories and experiences.

Claire quoted the opening lines of Charles Dickens' Tale of Two Cities as a description of the recent year at OPENhouse:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."

She said OPENhouse had faced some really tough times with financial cuts in support from local and national government. Faced with the potential consequences of these cuts it certainly felt like an age of national foolishness. But she said the great part of OPENhouse was its wisdom and belief, and here it feels as if we do live in an age of wisdom despite adversity. The OPENhouse organisation does what it does based on learned experience, not arrogance and it works really well.

Claire said one of the high points of the year was winning the Stroud Life Business award. She said this represented a positive recognition that service users at OPENhouse were transferring into the local community and were making a real contribution to life in Stroud.

Another notable event was in winning an "Oscat" for the Best Community Project film at the Stroud Community TV awards. This was in recognition of the Rough Traders' sleeping out night in Stroud during which many of the staff and some service users at OPENhouse had spent the night sleeping in the open before going straight back to work in the morning. As well as drawing attention to the plight of the homeless, it gave everyone the experience of having to face the following day after a night in the open.

Claire said the service users at OPENhouse had risen to the recent occasion of the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. They had suggested and then successfully organised a celebratory party at Delmont's Lot which was also attended by staff.

Claire said that Lindsey was now moving on from Delmont's Lot into her own home. She had contributed a great deal during her time at Delmont's Lot and still had much to offer. So it was appropriate that she should become the first OPENhouse Ambassador in the local community. Claire presented her with a certificate to mark the occasion and a bouquet of flowers for her new home.

Lindsey said she came to OPENhouse in September 2013 feeling lost, confused and scared. But she said the people here never gave up on me and I gradually joined in with my new friends. I will never forget the support I have had at OPENhouse.

Claire concluded her report with a quote from Maya Angelou: "My mission in life is not to merely survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style". Claire said she hoped that the same spirit could be emulated at OPENhouse.

## **10. Any Other Business**

Lucas Schoemaker said he wished to offer his compliments for the improvements made to the floor of the hall. Claire said this had been achieved through volunteer help. The walls were next in line for refurbishment.

## **11. Close of AGM**

Richard Brinton brought the AGM to a close by thanking everyone for their contributions to the meeting and inviting them to stay on for refreshments. He in particular thanked the service users who had made presentations, as it took courage to do this. He also thanked those who had helped to prepare the food and drinks.

The AGM closed at 6.20pm.