

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE CASE STUDY: COPPER BEECHES CARE HOME



“Investors in People is a way of life here. The whole programme has helped to build a cohesive team that shares the aspirations and success of the business. Investors in People is about treating people with respect and therefore attracting and retaining high quality staff.”

Tui Shirley, proprietor

Background

Size: 16 people

Sector: Residential Care

Locations: Oreston, Plymouth

Status: Recognised as an Investor in People in October 2003. Successfully reviewed November, 2006.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The organisation

New Zealander Tui Shirley and her husband Steve acquired the 20-bedded Copper Beeches Care Home in May 2002. The business has since evolved and grown considerably. Copper Beeches is now able to specialise in the care of elderly people with dementia, while operating at consistently high occupancy levels.

The challenge

Tui and Steve Shirley took over a business that was barely breaking even. The first priority was to build a strong and capable team of people. “I worked hands-on, both day and night shifts, until we were able to put a full staff together and appoint a manager,” Tui says.

“Our main focus was consistent delivery of high quality care – and to achieve that you need people who are reliable and committed. Recruiting to complement the existing team was difficult as resources were so limited locally. We therefore looked internationally and have been delighted with our highly skilled Senior Carers from the Philippines.”

The infrastructure of Copper Beeches also needed improving, as part of the drive to raise the performance of the business.

Most importantly, the staff needed to broaden their expertise through external qualifications. “I didn’t need a Westminster law to tell me that staff need training and developing,” Tui says.

“How can you expect people to achieve standards if they have not been trained on how to do that? It is fundamental - train, lead by example and treat people with the same respect you expect yourself”

The strategy

Staff development and the clients' sense of wellbeing have been central to the success of Copper Beeches. Tui Shirley has invested heavily in both.

Facilities at the home have been significantly upgraded, with extensive refurbishment of both the communal and private areas. Copper Beeches residents enjoy an enclosed garden as well as a programme of activities that range from arts and crafts to physical fitness.

Most critically, Copper Beeches embarked on a major NVQ-based training programme for staff.

In committing to the Investors in People in November 2002, Copper Beeches worked with an adviser to put formal systems into place for recording the process of training and developing 16 staff – and evaluating the benefits. The home also introduced induction not just for new staff, but for colleagues returning after long absences.

Now, some 70% of Copper Beeches' staff are qualified to Levels III and IV, with the remainder holding the Level II qualification – which is considerably in excess of the Care Standards requirement. The three Filipino staff now hold NVQ Level III, in addition to the nursing qualifications that they brought with them. Sue Carthy became the Manager of Copper Beeches after qualifying as a Registered Manager. Senior carer Rachel Carthy has qualified as a Registered Manager and Theresa Fulford and Paula Carthy have achieved NVQ4.

Led by Sue Carthy, staff also undergo specialist training in topics such as dementia, challenging behaviour, protection of vulnerable adults and protecting residents' dignity.

Tui also embraced new technology with a fervour, winning a Broadband4Devon Award for 'Best Mix of ICT and Workforce Skills'. "I designed an on-line business reporting system to enable managers to be truly accountable for the business. It also allowed me to keep an eye on things from any location. I could be sitting in New Zealand and be able to look at occupancy levels, rosters and wages. It really is fantastic."

Communications were improved still further with the introduction of a quarterly newsletter that reports to staff on key performance indicators such as occupancy, quality targets and budgets.

Tui says: "Staff realise, for example, that by looking after equipment and keeping waste to a minimum, they can keep us within budget – and they can see by their effort how they can contribute to the success of the home.

The results

Copper Beeches has built such a good reputation for quality care in a family environment, that year-round occupancy runs at almost 100%. The home receives consistently high ratings from the National Care Standards Council in all areas of its provision. The commitment to training has enabled the home to more than double its provision for dementia care. At the same time, Copper Beeches maintains staff turnover at historically low levels.

"Investors in People reflects a fundamental requirement for making our business successful," Tui says.

"And that is caring for staff, as well as clients."