

MANAGER OF THE MONTH

HEATHER CHOAT, MANAGER OF HALSTEAD HALL, EXPLAINS HOW SHE TOOK THE HOME FROM AN 'INADEQUATE' RATING TO 'GOOD' WITHIN 12 SHORT MONTHS.

How did you join Halstead Hall?

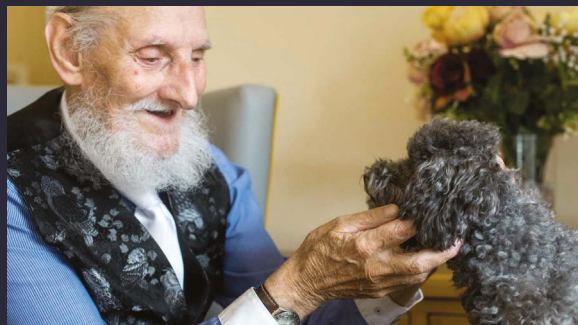
I joined Halstead Hall as home manager in 2018 after a 27-year career in home management. I'd been involved in running residential homes, including the set-up of a new service from scratch, but the turnaround of Halstead hall was a new challenge.

What is special about Halstead Hall?

When I joined, Stow Healthcare were supporting the home under a management contract with a view to buying it, which they then did in May 2018. It had a terrible reputation; there were poor practices to eradicate and a perception to change. It was the start of a journey that involved hard work, long nights and commitment, but what we have now is a home that is at the heart of the community and a team that are highly respected. I am proud of how far it has come, and how the team have evolved.

What do you find most rewarding about your current job?

I know it sounds cliché, but it is residents' laughter and smiles – it lets you know you are doing a great job. I was on the receiving end of my team's care last year after a family member was admitted to the home. It was a tough time for me and my family, but the team were exceptional and I couldn't have been prouder. We felt totally at ease and cared for the entire time. The end-of-life care was delivered with such compassion, there was no place I would rather have my loved one for the last few months of their life. I have seen first-hand the level of care families receive; knowing we can make a difference at the toughest time in people's lives makes it all worth it.



What has been your greatest challenge and how did you overcome it?

Winning hearts and minds and overcoming the previous reputation of the home was tough. It was one of the biggest roadblocks to recruiting residents and staff. When we started we had a limited budget and had to be resourceful. We have completely rebuilt the team one block at a time, recruiting new staff, taking them with us on the journey and making them part of the change. To have changed perceptions so much and have staff, residents and families that are now ambassadors for the home is amazing. We have proved that with hard work and a truly caring ethos you can change people's lives.

Tell us the three things you need to provide great care?

Number one: clear communication. Everyone needs to be singing from the same hymn sheet, whatever your role in the home.

Next you need patience, empathy and understanding. Rome wasn't built in a day. Getting to know someone to provide truly person-centred care takes time. You have to listen to what people say and what they don't say, especially when it comes to those with dementia.

Lastly: dedication. Know your end goal and stick to it. Even when things were tough we stuck to the plan, and the standard of care at the home has increased tenfold.

How do you relax?

I love reading and spending time with my grandchildren. They always cheer me up if I am having a bad day and have been such a support to me over the last four years. I couldn't do it without them. And of course, I love my nights in with my miniature poodle Jack. Jack is a big part of life at the home and is by my side most days. The residents adore him! [CIP](#)