

# Investors in People Assessment Report

## Heatherdene Residential Care Home

Assessment report by: David Burton  
March 11<sup>th</sup> 1999

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#### 1 Introduction

##### The Assessor

1.1 The assessment was carried out by David Burton, a qualified Assessor for the Standard. This was his fourteenth assessment. He attended his original Henley 3b training in February 1992 and qualified as an Assessor in October 1994. As an advisor for the Standard he has been involved with many different organisations and over two dozen of these have been recognised.

## **Organisation Background**

1.2 Heatherdene is a privately owned and run residential care home which is registered with the local authority for 29 mentally ill adults of varying ages. It was established in October 1982 and is situated in a residential area close to the centre of Eastbourne, East Sussex. Heatherdene employs 23 full and part time staff. Staff work in shifts to ensure that there is 24-hour coverage.

1.3 The organisation achieved recognition as an Investor in People in April 1996 and since then has experienced a reasonably stable organisational environment and has continued to improve its processes.

1.4 The proprietor, Keith Matthews, has been involved at a national level with the improvement of training and development for care home staff. He was on a working party which developed the sector's NVQs and a separate business he owns – Heathercroft Training – provides training services to the sector.

Mr Matthews is also on the editorial board of the industry's leading publication and contributes to Croners Care Home Publications.

Apart from Investors in People, Heatherdene is subject to annual inspections by the County Council to keep its license and as a member of the "Classic Homes" network (set up to provide care home businesses with a corporate identity), receives regular visits and reviews by full time assessors.

## **Authority and Autonomy**

1.5 Heatherdene meets all eight guidelines for authority and autonomy.

## **2 Assessment Process**

### **The Portfolio**

2.1 The portfolio was presented in a ring binder with a clear "storyboard" and well indexed evidence.

### **Desk Top Portfolio Review**

2.2 Particular areas to look at and probe on site were:

- \* Did staff confirm that the processes described in the portfolio happened reliably and effectively.
- \* How does supervision work? (2.3)
- \* What outside inspection is there? How does this contribute to planning? (4.3, 2.1, 2.3)
- \* Explain the training matrix? (2.3, 2.6)
- \* How often are staff meetings – which staff participate? (1.2, 1.3)
- \* What changes have there been to training and development since 1996? (4.5)
- \* Management development? (3.2)

A list of questions was developed to ensure that these topics were covered with staff and managers.

### 3 On Site Assessment

#### Assessment Planning

3.1 When the assessment was notified to me, I contacted the home manager Mrs Terry Blandford and explained the process to her. We arranged that I should pick up the portfolio and answer any questions she had. This was done on February 9<sup>th</sup> 1999. I selected the interview sample and telephoned this through early the following week to allow time for a schedule to be drawn up.

#### Sample Frame

3.2 Guidelines for the sample frame were that between 40-70% of staff should be interviewed. The organisation is based on one site and a diagram of the structure of the organisation is included in Appendix 2.

3.3 I interviewed the manager, eight members of staff and the owner:

Type of staff	Number employed	Number interviewed
Management and admin	4	2
Care	14	6
Housekeeping	4	1
Kitchen	1	1
Total	23	10 (43%)

The interviewees included three part-timers and two who regularly worked on the night shift.

Heatherdene has a low turnover of staff, but two who had started within the last year were interviewed.

#### The Assessment Process

3.3 Interviews were conducted in the privacy of an office which has recently been constructed outside the home. Notes were taken at the time of the interviews and reviewed immediately afterwards in each case. Later on the notes were marked up and an interview evidence matrix was prepared to confirm that a sufficient spread of reliable staff had been considered.

3.4 Audit trails were followed at the individual and organisational level:

\* I was able to check the reliability of the system for identifying, actioning and evaluating individual training with a number of staff. The individual training plans for all staff note the training needs identified at appraisal, when action should be taken and what the personal and business benefits are. Staff confirmed that the appraisals were completely reliable and three were asked and confirmed that the training identified at their last appraisals had either taken place or had been booked. All staff confirmed that regular one-to-one discussions with managers included opportunities to evaluate and follow-up training they had had.

The annual training plan summarises all training and lists the links between training programmes and objectives of the business. I was able to follow the logic from the business plan, through the training plan for several key programmes. These included Fire Training and Health & Safety (vital in a Care Home); medication; controlling aggression. The overall

contribution of training is discussed at frequent management review meetings and there was evidence of how approaches have been altered following this evaluation.

#### **4 Outcomes of the Assessment**

##### **Commitment**

Heatherdene scores very highly amongst its staff for the company's commitment to their training and development. All staff interviewed gave 10/10 when asked to rate the commitment out of ten and were enthusiastic about the support they receive from the manager and her deputy.

It was also clear that regular communications meetings and notes have got across a clear message to staff about the values and standards of the home and what it expects to achieve for its clients. Staff were able to express the main aims of the home clearly and could talk about how they contributed to the overall effort.

##### **Planning**

There is a simple, but reliable planning process which produces business and training plans. Review is very regular and there is clear evidence of how plans are updated in the light of changing circumstances. The planning of training is informed by top down and bottom up analysis of training needs and a lot of work has been done on ensuring that staff are involved in appropriate NVQs. Staff are involved in client reviews and regular discussions about improvements at the home.

##### **Action**

Induction is well regarded and systematic and has been improved over the past year. Managers and staff are all actively involved in improving performance and discussing and actioning training needs. It is clear that managers are well equipped through their training and attitudes to support the effort. The association with the sister company Heathercroft Services (an NVQ provider) means that plenty of up-to-date information about training opportunities is available.

##### **Evaluation**

The reliable meetings calendar ensures that the business is well controlled and that progress is reviewed regularly. Clear evidence was received of the evaluation of the overall effect of training: through reviews of the training plan and reviews of progress towards achieving business goals. The regular supervision of staff and their involvement in standards-based training means that evaluation of what they have learnt and how they are using it is carried out regularly. There was evidence of changes to training and changes in systems supporting the training effort which have been brought about by the evaluation process since the original recognition.

#### **5 Recommendation**

Heatherdene Residential Care Home has continued to manage carefully all the aspects covered by the Investors in People standard. There is a clear vision of what the business should achieve in terms of standards for clients and this is well understood by all staff who express great pride in working for the company. There is a very thorough approach to appraisals, supervision and all training matters and this is confirmed by staff. All those interviews rated the commitment of the owner to their training and development as very high and spoke highly of the developmental support they received from the home manager.

Training is carefully evaluated and there have been improvements in the approach and delivery since the original recognition.

I therefore recommend that Heatherdene Residential Care Home be re-recognised as an Investor in People

**David Burton**

**March 11<sup>th</sup> 1999**

## **6 Development Areas**

The assessment did not reveal glaring areas for further development in terms of meeting the requirements of the Investors in People standard. However, the following topics may be worth looking at:

\* The business planning process is quite strategic in what it addresses. While this is a good thing and perfectly in line with Investors in People, the organisation might consider having an annual improvement plan generated by some form of "self assessment" activity.

\* While some of the Home's objectives are clearly measurable, it is not clear whether this happens consistently and, if so, how this data is used to improve the business. Consideration could be given to ensuring that all objectives: (i) directly support the values and goals of the business (ii) are measurable (iii) are regularly reviewed.

## **7 Appendices**

### **Outcomes of the Assessment**

#### **1.1 The commitment from top management to train and develop employees is communicated effectively throughout the organisation**

Heatherdene has been consistent in expressing its commitment to the training and development of staff since the original assessment. The proprietor communicates face to face and in writing to staff on training matters, informing them of opportunities, encouraging them in their studies and congratulating them on their achievements.

The manager of the home and her deputy hold regular one-to-one discussions with all members of staff during which performance and training are covered. Detailed individual training plans are drawn up and used.

All staff interviewees are asked to rate the company on its commitment to their training and development. All of them gave the company ten out of ten.

#### **1.2 Employees at all levels are aware of the broad aims or vision of the organisation**

The Heatherdene mission statement has been consistent for the past five or six years and is noted on letterheadings, brochures and noticeboards. All staff cover the statement and the home's aims and objectives during induction. The proprietor circulates a letter to all staff at the end of each year setting out the achievements of the year and describing the developments expected in the following year.

There are regular staff meetings at which issues and changes are briefed to staff and two-way discussions take place. The staff handbook sets out the home's aims and objectives and all staff interviewed had a copy.

A promotional video has been produced which emphasises the homes priorities and this is used during interviews for new staff and during induction. All staff, when asked to relate what they felt the home was trying to achieve were able to give a good account of the priorities noted in the business plan.

**1.3 The employer has considered what employees at all levels will contribute to the success of the organisation and has communicated this effectively to them**  
The regular meetings attended by all staff are held so that everyone can be updated and issues of performance and standards can be addressed. There is a comprehensive procedures manual readily available to all staff which sets out standards and methods.

All staff have up-to-date job descriptions and there are six-monthly appraisals which are fully written up afterwards. A selection of these were inspected. Staff have regular one-to-ones with the manager or her deputy during which they receive feedback on their performance and coaching.

Staff were confident that they knew what was expected of them and what to do if they faced an unfamiliar situation.

#### **1.4 Where representative structures exist...**

There are no representative structures at Heatherdene and no trade union membership.

**2.1 A written but flexible plan sets out the organisation's goals and targets**  
Heatherdene has a Business Plan which is updated on an annual basis. The plan is quite analytical and strategic in nature but includes clear aims and objectives. Detailed planning happens on a more regular basis as the business responds to legal and market changes. Regular meetings of the management team which discuss and set out these reviews to planning are minuted.

#### **2.2 A written plan identifies the organisation's training and development needs and specifies what actions will be taken to meet these needs**

There is an annual training plan which is compiled as a result of identifying overall needs through the business plan and individual needs, through the appraisal process. The plan is updated during the year in response to new needs being identified. It is easy to follow and is on the staff noticeboard so that everyone has immediate and regular access to it.

#### **2.3 Training and development needs are regularly reviewed against goals and targets at the organisation, team and individual level**

Heatherdene is a small business and there is no distinction between "the organisation" and teams within it. The overall training needs are identified formally once a year during the business planning process. The organisation benefits from the fact that its sister company, Heathercroft Services, is a major regional supplier of NVQ training for the care sector. This means that Heathercroft work identifying appropriate training for the sector informs the Heatherdene plan.

Everyone interviewed reported that they had regular six-monthly appraisals and the paperwork for these was in place and up to date. Staff also reported that they got monthly (and, when necessary, weekly) “supervision” one-to-one meetings at which training needs are sometimes identified.

#### **2.4 A written plan identifies the resources that will be used to meet training and development needs**

There is a financial budget for the training and staff are given time off for their studies. The Training plan sets out the resources which are allocated for all training events.

#### **2.5 Responsibility for developing people is clearly identified and understood throughout the organisation, starting at the top**

Job descriptions are clear about the responsibility for training and development and these are reinforced by the regular appraisals and one-to-ones. Staff were clear about who they should talk to about training matters and the Training plan sets out who should action any training which has been identified.

#### **2.6 Objectives are set for training and development actions at the organisation, team and individual level**

The overall training plan sets out a list of expected business benefits (performance objectives) for each training programme and the training courses all have detailed learning objectives (most of them leading to externally validated qualifications such as NVQs).

Individual training plans set out the training required (learning objectives) and both the business and personal benefits which are expected (performance objectives). Staff report that they get frequent opportunities to discuss how their training is going and receive support from their managers in finding opportunities to try out new skills.

#### **2.7 Where appropriate, training targets are linked to external standards, such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and units**

There is extensive use of NVQs for care staff. In addition there are qualification-based training targets for hygiene, safety and cooking. The business also uses an NVQ approach for management training.

#### **3.1 All new employees are introduced effectively to the organisation and all employees new to a job are given the training and development they need to do that job**

There is a detailed and well thought out process for inducting new staff which includes a mixture of classroom activity, guided reading and on-the-job training. New starters have access to a comprehensive procedures manual and they are slotted in to appropriate NVQ programmes as soon as practicable. Two recent starters were interviewed and were enthusiastic about how well they had been equipped for their new jobs.

The current manager had been promoted from the deputy position and received management training as well as extensive coaching and support from the proprietor.

When staff move into a special position – like being responsible for clients with extra one-to-one needs, they are given extra training and receive support as they learn the extra aspects of their job.

### **3.2 Managers are effective in carrying out their responsibilities for training and developing employees**

Both the manager and her deputy have been receiving management training through the use of management NVQs. The manager has achieved levels 4 and 5 and the deputy is currently working through level 4. In addition they have TDLB assessor units which enables them to assess the performance of staff in relation to requirements of Care NVQs.

They both have their appraisals carried out by the proprietor who receives feedback on their performance from staff, clients and outside agencies.

### **3.3 Managers are actively involved in supporting employees to meet their training and developmental needs**

The managers are very regularly involved in supporting staff to meet training and developmental needs through one-to-one supervision meetings, appraisals and staff meetings. Staff used very complimentary language to describe the level of support they got.

### **3.4 All employees are made aware of the training and development opportunities open to them**

The active role of the managers described above is supported by regular information from the sister company Heathercroft Services, describing the NVQ and other training which is on offer. Staff have easy access to all this information and are actively encouraged to think through what might be appropriate to help them improve performance.

### **3.5 All employees are encouraged to help identify and meet their job-related training and development needs**

Staff are involved in this through the formal appraisal and training plan processes. They all reported that the meetings were very much opportunities for proper discussions about their development. In less formal ways training needs are identified through supervision and regular meetings of staff. Often these are met with short coaching inputs from other members of staff with more experience, or the managers.

### **3.6 Action takes place to achieve the training and development objectives of individual, teams and the organisation**

Staff were very happy with the level and type of training made available to them. They are involved in formal programmes – very often leading to externally validated qualifications – and also have informal opportunities. These include: coaching, involvement in ideas-generating team sessions, meetings and reading.

### **4.1 The organisation evaluates the impact of training and development actions on knowledge, skills and attitudes**

Most of the formal training is carried out by Heathercroft Services and there is a system in place to collect data from delegates which can and do lead to improvements in the training events themselves.

Much of the training, because it is geared towards qualifications, has a built in and thorough test of what difference has been made to skills, knowledge and attitude. The business also uses regular assessment by outside bodies (including for Investors in People) as a way of receiving feedback about staff attitudes.

#### **4.2 The organisation evaluates the impact of training and development actions on performance**

Staff are closely observed by managers who work in close quarters with them. The one-to-ones and appraisals are focused on performance improvement and include discussions about what has been learnt from training and how this is being used in the job. The training plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that business and personal benefits agreed beforehand are being achieved.

Staff talked about how they had planned improvements with their managers following training. Staff are also aware that the encouragement they have to achieve qualifications is good for their performance and provides them with positive career opportunities.

#### **4.3 The organisation evaluates the contribution of training and development to the achievement of its goals and targets**

The managers review the training plan on a regular basis – at least bi-monthly at management meetings and during the business planning process. These are opportunities which are used to evaluate what contribution training and development has made and to make appropriate adjustments.

Changes are made to training in light of new requirements from relatives and local authorities or feedback from clients, staff and inspecting bodies. The inspections are a particularly powerful way of evaluating training as any recommendations have to be seriously considered (or risk losing the licence!)

#### **4.4 Top management understands the costs and benefits of training and developing employees**

The proprietor is an acknowledged industry expert on training in the care sector and he and the manager have a very good grasp of the total costs of training (in time and money). They also clearly understand the benefits in terms of adding to the business and motivating staff in what is a sector with traditionally very high staff turnover levels.

#### **4.5 Action takes place to implement improvements to training and development identified as a result of evaluation**

The home was able to show evidence of improvements to training and to the processes which support it. The training plan format has been improved; induction has been strengthened and the production of the video has provided a new way of getting over consistent messages about the home's values; supervision has been strengthened and has become more regular. Staff interviewed at both assessments talked about clear improvements in the training and the support they receive.

#### **4.6 Top management's continuing commitment to training and developing employees is communicated to all employees**

Staff are totally convinced that commitment is deep and genuine and ongoing.