

NEW WEBSITE COMING! Later this year we will be getting up to date with a brand new website. The current one looks good, but isn't doing all the things that we need it to do. The amazing design company, Clockwise, who have supported us for many years are doing all the hard work. Watch this space!

OUTSTANDING CARE!



We are so very proud of our staff at our registered home Firs Court for being rated 'outstanding' for the category of Care in the Care Quality Commission's latest inspection.

We were delighted to read that CQC felt our "care is so good that it prolongs people's length of life and supports people to die with care and dignity".

The report talks of the care being person-centred, innovative and having a creative approach such as making an encouraging video diary of one person's recovery from being so unwell that they couldn't walk to walking independently and using an exercise bike. Some of the quotes from our service users include "I'm happy here, I can do what I want and staff will help me." One service user described staff as "100% kind."

The full report can be seen online at http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAD1098.pdf



SURVEY

We have put together a short questionnaire which we would be grateful if you could spare the time to complete. It will help us to tailor our mailings to you. If you're happy with what we send you, there is no need to send it back.

Many thanks.

MELODY AND HARMONY

With thanks to a grant from Awards for All, we will be running a series of music sessions and singing for pleasure here at The Fircroft Centre, starting just after Easter.

Music is a great way to engage in a meaningful and enjoyable activity, using a range of instruments to communicate and express feelings in a way that words alone cannot always do. It can also help people to develop relationships and address issues such as feelings of isolation. The music sessions will also involve listening to music, followed by discussion. This will give our service users an opportunity to talk about relevant emotional themes if they wish.



West End singer Katy Treharne, whom some will know from her fabulous performances at our Music in the Garden events, will build on the music sessions by leading singing afternoons. These can have many benefits including enjoyment, relaxation, learning something new, plus encouraging good posture and breathing. Developing the confidence to be involved in a

group is a big step for some, and we hope this gentle environment will encourage service users to have a go.



LOTTERY FUNDED

DIARY DATES:

21st May — Surbiton Farmer's Market
10th July — Claygate Country Five Run
16th November — Fircroft AGM



CAROL'S STORY



“My name is Carol, and the best part of 30 years ago I had a breakdown... I hit the biggest, deepest, darkest pit I'd ever known and to which there seemed no way out.... and life was hell”.

This is how Carol begins to tell of her battle for recovery from her mental illness. Back then, Carol was in and out of hospital receiving various kinds of treatment, including ECT, medications and talking therapies.

Even after receiving her diagnosis of depression and borderline personality disorder, it was still a difficult time as it was something she needed to come to terms with, and to understand how her illness

affected her. She battled with her illness for ten years before trying out the Fircroft Centre. What she found here was “a really warm, caring and relaxed atmosphere where there wasn't any pressure to ‘perform’ - this was very different from the NHS model I had experienced”.

At Fircroft she was able to join in various groups, helping her to believe in herself. She continues: “It's a place where I can experiment with doing different things. Where I can try out things, but there is never a pressure to have to do something or be someone.”

It continues to be a long journey for Carol, but with the right kind of support, she is beginning to understand and process the turmoil she constantly feels inside of her.

What our Service Users say about Fircroft

During an art session, service users traced their hands and wrote what Fircroft meant to them.

Here are some of the comments:

- Support
- Friends
- Art
- Fun
- Cooked Meal
- Activities
- Education
- Love



- Warm
- Peace
- Time
- Friends
- Safe Haven
- Tranquillity
- Motivation
- Welcoming
- Listening

MENTAL HEALTH REPORT — 'PARITY OF ESTEEM'

Mental health issues continue to gain considerable media coverage and the budget cuts are only serving to highlight all the gaps in provision. According to the BBC, budgets for mental health trusts across England fell by 8% in 2014/2015. The reduction, worth almost £600m, comes at the same time as referrals to community mental health teams rising by nearly 20%.

In February 2016 the Independent Mental Health Taskforce to the NHS in England published their 'Five Year Forward View for Mental Health'. In this report they state that mental health problems now represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK.

The cost of this to the economy is an estimated £105 billion—roughly the cost of the entire NHS. The report also states that mental health has not had the priority awarded to physical health, has been short of qualified staff and has been deprived of funds. It stresses the need to provide equal status to mental and physical health, equal status to mental health staff and equal funding for mental health services calling for a fresh mindset for mental health within the NHS and beyond. NHS England refer to this thinking as “Parity of Esteem”.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists cite the concept of ‘parity of esteem’ as ultimately a mindset for government, policy-makers, commissioners, providers, professionals and the public to think in terms of the whole person—body and mind—and to apply a ‘parity test’ to their activities and attitudes.

THANK YOU!

We are very grateful to so many people who have put time and energy into helping us fundraise over the last few months. This page is for them.

GOLDEN YEAR!

Next year (2017) will mark the 50th Anniversary of The Fircroft Trust. Started in 1967 by local resident Mary Kahan to provide food and clothing items to make life more comfortable for patients at the old Epsom Institutions. The Fircroft Trust now provides state of the art accommodation for 23 residents and tenants with learning disabilities at Firs Court in Hook, Chessington.



We also run the Fircroft Resource centre in Surbiton where over 80 service users with mental health problems are currently being supported to reach their full recovery potential.

We are proud of our history, our achievements and of our future plans and are planning to celebrate! If you would like to be part of the celebrations and would think about joining the Golden Year Committee please contact susannah@thefircrofttrust.org Tel: 020 8399 1772

Thank you **Carol and Maxine** for managing our Collection Boxes - priceless!

Thank you to **Anne** for donating her scrumptious marmalade to sell in aid of the Fircroft Trust — £310!

We are exceedingly grateful to all our supporters who have been able to set up a Standing Order in aid of Fircroft — it allows us to plan our services and fundraising in a much more effective way.

CALLING ALL RUNNERS!

On 10 July we will be joining in the Claygate Country Five Run to raise funds for our work. This 5 mile run starts at 10:30am on the village recreation ground. The route around Claygate is mostly along lanes and footpaths through the surrounding fields and common land. It will be a lovely change from pounding tarmac, and being so close, will not take up too much of the day. To obtain a registration form, please contact Hilary Orton on hilary@thefircrofttrust.org



We are very grateful to all our **volunteers** who have given unstintingly of their time and energy to help us in the running of the organisation. We are also very pleased to be able to provide work experience to the various students from local schools, including: Coombe Girls, Tiffin Boys & Girls, Surbiton High, Tolworth Girls, Holy Cross and Chessington Community College.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR LOCAL GROUPS WHO SUPPORTED US:

St John the Baptist, New Malden: £150
Chessington Charities: £500
Rotary Club of New Malden: £ 200
Kingston Nursing Association: £2,500
Elmbridge Lodge Charities Association: £1,092
Rotary Club, Surbiton: £150
Buckland Women's Club: £30
Tolworth United Reform Church: £100
Hook Singers: £300
Centrepoint Computer Services: £100
Chessington Methodist Church Women's Fellowship: £67
Sainsbury's Hook: £91.27
St Matthew's C of E Primary School: £683.36
New Malden Methodist Church: £60.60
Kingston Rotary: £88.83
Brand Learning: £250 + Christmas gifts for our service users on Christmas Day
Hillcroft College staff: £45 (in lieu of Christmas cards)
Surbiton New Life Baptist Church: £500
Eden Kafevend for providing beverages for our Jumble Sale
Ashdown Group—furniture donation
Clockwise Design: for their faithful support
Surbiton Hill Methodist Church: £500

Thank you to **Matt Hatton** of KCAH for giving our keynote talk at our AGM in November. It is always wonderful to hear of the great work being carried out by other charities.

We are also grateful to **Carol** for giving such a poignant talk on her mental health journey. For more of her story, please see Page 2.

DO YOU SHOP ON-LINE? You can have your cake and eat it—shop to your heart’s content and fundraise at the same time! *By using Easyfundraising.com as a portal to your favourite online stores, Fircroft can get a percentage donation from the retailer you select, at no cost to you. A win-win situation if ever there was one!*

THE SHOPS

Over the years we have teamed up with the Job Centre Plus to offer Work Placements. This government scheme is designed for people who are on benefits to gain new skills and confidence to then go on to permanent work, with a reference.

It has worked really well at our shops who take on up to three placements at a time for around 30 hours a week. Jo, our Tolworth Manager says: “It’s been such a privilege to see people grow in confidence and skills. We have been able to offer more permanent volunteering positions and we were even able to take one person as a member of our paid staff, when the vacancy arose.”

Carol, who joined us recently says: “I came to volunteer at the Tolworth Shop on a work placement scheme in January. What I like about the shop is that it is very helpful to me in understanding how a retail business works. The staff are very encouraging and friendly and there is a very positive atmosphere here. When my work placement ends next month I would very much like to continue working here as a volunteer.”



LEGACIES

Amongst all the funding received by charities, it has been legacies that have consistently increased over the last five years. All other sources of charitable income have decreased, so charities continue to struggle to meet the ever increasing needs of the people they support.

Although we continuously seek funding from different sources, such as trusts and companies, we have found that there is less funding available, and we are relying on the kindness of our supporters more and more.

It is with this back-drop that we would like to ask, respectfully, if, after taking care of the needs of your family, you might be able to consider leaving us a donation in your will.

While we can’t advise you on how to go about it, we do have some guidance notes that can help you save time when you go to the solicitors if and when you next draw up or amend your will. If you would like a copy, please email: jill@thefircrofttrust.org or call Jill on 020 8399 1772.

DONATION — Every penny really does make a difference...

Please find enclosed a cheque made payable to The Fircroft Trust for £

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

email: _____

Telephone No. _____

Please tick here if you do not want an acknowledgement

If you are a UK Tax Payer, please let us know by ticking the box and filling in your name and address. We will then be able to claim 25p from the Inland Revenue for each pound donated.

THANK YOU

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.