

## *Driving Standards Higher in Care*

The Care Standards Act (2000) is changing the care environment, requiring those working in the sector to be working towards a Level 2 national qualification, which is around the same as an A\* - C GCSE. The onus is now on care providers to work to meet this stipulation. However, the requirement need not be a burden for employers. St. Elizabeth's Centre in Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, one of only two national epilepsy centres offering services to all age groups, has implemented OCR's Level 2 Health and Social Care NVQ and is one of many care providers to see the benefits of a fully qualified workforce. Cheryl Gow, care manager at St. Elizabeth's explains:

"We employ around 250 full time staff at St. Elizabeth's, so the thought of implementing the Health and Social Care NVQ across the organisation was a daunting one. But as the NVQ is work based, it wasn't long before we realised just how we could incorporate them into the workplace – the units encompass all aspects of work, with everything from maintaining a safe and clean environment to observing, monitoring and recording care conditions of individuals. In fact, if anything, OCR's NVQ helped make everyone even more aware of all the different responsibilities involved in a job like this."

St. Elizabeth's initially used an external assessment centre to assess staff but soon discovered a much better alternative. Cheryl continues: "In May 2005 we became an approved OCR NVQ Centre. We have a dedicated staff development team taking on the quality control of the assessment centre and doing the bulk of assessing, and as well as this we train up all our care managers to become qualified assessors. This enabled us to deliver the qualification and assessment in house. We even have internal verifiers here who can moderate the assessment."

"The NVQ has become part of our offering of internal training now. It has helped drive our standards even higher here as the staff are being continuously assessed in their roles. We also benefit from seeing staff motivated by having their skills recognised with a national qualification."

One final observation from Cheryl sums up the significance of the qualification. She explains: "One care assistant, having completed the NVQ, went on to become a care manager. As well as gaining a national qualification, the NVQ gave her the confidence to progress further in her career - it really is something both the employer and carer can gain enormous rewards from."

***For further information on OCR's Health and Social Care qualifications, or to find out more about becoming an OCR centre, please contact the OCR Customer Contact Centre on 01223 552804 or visit [www.healthandsocialcare.ocr.org.uk](http://www.healthandsocialcare.ocr.org.uk)***