

A lack of suitable care for a family member led to a new business venture for a Dorset entrepreneur. Dominic Musgrave found out more.

# How Cheryl turned to care homes

CHERYL Hadland already ran a group of successful children's day nurseries for several years after struggling to find appropriate and flexible care to suit her needs.

And when her mother was struggling to look after her husband, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she decided to move into care homes.

As part of Reside Care Homes, Cheryl opened her first site in Christchurch, Dorset three years ago, and her second in Southbourne has recently received its dementia registration.

She told Caring UK that building the group is a massive career change from her days working as a professional scuba diver in the 1980s.

Cheryl added: "When my mother's husband was diagnosed with dementia we decided to look after him ourselves, but when that was no longer possible we looked at what care was available.

"The main issue we looked for in the care homes was safety because he had a tendency for wandering off, so we needed somewhere with a secure garden and a front door that didn't lead out on to a busy road.

"We also wanted somewhere that had activities for him, because he

was still under 70 at the time, so we wanted him to be able to have some fun rather than just sitting and sleeping all day."

At the time, Cheryl was negotiating turning a former school into a day nursery, but when it became clear that it was not going to be financially viable she decided to convert it into a care home.

"It was always about dementia for me, and I was only really ever interested in looking after people who needed 24-hour care," she added. "It has been a massive learning curve for me, but it has been a good experience, and I now want to open a care home a year for the next few years, although that could be difficult with the way the banks are lending at the moment."

Cheryl did manage to secure funding shortly before the credit crunch to purchase her second home, Southwood, which has just received its dementia registration and can cater for up to 31 residents.

She added: "We were lucky to get the sale in just before the recession, and plan to make improvements to the home over the next couple of years.

"At the moment it does not have a lift, so that is something we are looking to install over the next few



Cheryl Hadland with a resident

months.

"We have also applied to the Carbon Trust for a grant so that we can put in a new kitchen, insulate the home and replace some windows because not all of them are double glazing."

And she said that other operators should consider offering specialist

care at their homes.

"I think the care homes that will do best in future will be those that adapt to what is needed.

"Social services are helping elderly people stay in their own homes for longer, so those homes that won't accept people with dementia are likely to have empty beds."

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## Care home group struggles with recruitment drive

By Mary Ferguson

A CARE home group says its recruitment drive is not going as well as it hoped as it is finding nurses hard to come by.

Alpha Care Homes, which has five sites in Worcestershire and three in Warwickshire, is on the lookout for 18 staff in total, including a training officer, care assistants, laundry assistant, weekend cook, domestic assistant, office support staff.

But head of care Caroline Wood told Caring UK they are struggling to fill the five vacancies they also have for nurses.

She added: "As the number of residents we look after increases we need to recruit more staff as we are committed to offering the best quality care.

"During this time of rising unemployment we have continued to fill job vacancies with relative ease – with the exception of nurses as there is a short supply of qualified nurses nationally, and as a result of the Border and Immigration service tightening the criteria for work permits and visas.

"Most of our care home managers started their careers with Alpha as a registered general nurse and, through hard work and training, have achieved their goals."

Alpha aims to recruit two nurses at Wayside Care Home in Bromsgrove, one at Mockley Manor at Ullenhall



Caroline Wood

near Redditch and two at Westley Court in Cookley near Kidderminster.

Human resources manager Harriet Woodall added: "We would love to hear from anyone interested in applying for a job with us – in particular nurses, who are in such short supply."

The group employs a total of more than 600 staff in Worcestershire, the West Midlands, West Sussex and London.