



**THE OAKLEA TRUST**  
*Towards independence...*

**John Gee**

I have worked for Lancashire Adult and Community Services (Social Services) for 33 years. Commencing as a Social Work Assistant in 1973, I later went on to become a Medical Social Worker. I qualified in 1979 and continued at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary until 1982. As a Medical Social Worker, I covered wards at Royal Lancaster Infirmary, Lancaster Moor Hospital, Longlands Annexe, Beaumont Hospital, St. John of God Hospital and Meathop Hospital. I worked with all medical disciplines and enjoyed good working relationships with all professionals.

In 1982 I became a Senior Social Worker with physically disabled and older people. In 1984 I transferred back to Senior in the hospital setting where I worked mainly with people who suffered chronic conditions and also as Senior Social Worker in the Department of Medicine for the Elderly. This was a new venture and focussed on rehabilitation. I also had strong links with the Department of Psychiatry where much of the work was involved with patients suffering from dementia and their families/carers.

During 1993 Lancashire began working in accordance with the Community Care Act. Roles changed widely and as a result, the authority was split into purchaser and provider units. I was appointed to the post of Senior Social Worker, Elderly Provider. This covered Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre and my team were engaged in long term social work with older people. This again included a well defined link with psycho-geriatric services. The team was community based and had a very busy workload.

The year 2000 brought further change for the authority and the purchaser/provider split ceased to exist. I opted for the role of Customer Care Manager in Preston, Fylde and Wyre. The team had responsibility for accepting all referrals and distributing them to appropriate team managers. I also managed Sensory Impairment staff including Rehabilitation Officers with Visually Impaired People, Technical Officers with deaf and hard of hearing people and BSL Interpreters.

The Sensory Impairment Team was formed in 2004 and I took the opportunity to apply for Team Manager, Deaf and Hearing Impairment. I was successful in this and have enjoyed the pioneering work and innovative opportunities. The post covers the entire county with Social Worker, Deaf people, Sensory Support Officer and BSL Interpreters. I have found this work to be stimulating and very revealing. It is extremely gratifying to see people's lives changed by enabling them to seek their own pathways to independence. In addition I also offer support the deaf-blind team who are contracted from Sense.

Over the years I have been involved in many working groups and learning opportunities. I have used group work with dermatology patients and my work was the subject of a paper in a medical journal. I have been active in training colleagues and for many years I taught on the adult abuse courses. I have always enjoyed the enabling role and encourage team members to develop and innovate.

In September 2006 I retired but due to difficulties in appointing a new manager, I agreed to continue for 2 days per week. Hopefully this will be resolved soon.

Finally, and on a personal level, I have been married to Pat for 41 years. We have 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren. Pat caught the Polio virus 58 years ago and has mobility difficulties and over the last few years, the 'late effects of polio'. However, we enjoy a very full life and are both concerned that all who have a disability should be encouraged and enabled to enjoy independence, inclusion and dignity. I look forward to serving on the board of the Oaklea Trust and in particular meeting and sharing with customers.