**Oral History Transcript – Tim – Sobell Lodge**

**Rewind – Leonard Cheshire Disability, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund**

**Filmed** – 2016

**Start of transcription**

[Text on screen: How did you start working for Leonard Cheshire Disability?]

[Tim]

00:00:10 - I didn't have a job, and was 16 then. So I went to the job centre, and they told me that Cheshire Homes was advertising for staff. So, I went for an interview at the local Cheshire Home which is Mote Park in Maidstone. And they gave me a job at 16, so I started at 16 full-time in Mote House in Maidstone.

00:00:31 - That was in 1975. [laughs] That was a long time ago.

00:00:35 - So, yeah. So, quite an eye-opener, and you're quite shocked from, obviously, leaving school to suddenly going into care. And things have changed very much in care. I think over the years now, and I mean, basically when you started full-time in care, you were really thrown in the deep end even at 16, and you were very involved in every aspect of care.

00:00:56 - I did have some, I was put down to work with someone decent who we do nowadays, so I worked with somebody that showed me the ropes and showed me what to do and what not to do and this type of thing, and talked me through things. But it was very - compared with today's … the way we look after people in the homes and the conditions we've dropped people in, it's very, very different.

[Text on screen: What are your memories of the residents at Mote House?]

00:01:17 - We had some real characters, and very mischievous residents who were always getting up to mischief. And things change, really. I suppose I was certainly quite young when I was there, and I, do a lot of work with health and safety nowadays, but I mean, I wouldn't be allowed to do some things I did.

00:01:36 - If the residents wanted to do things, I mean, there's a couple of the residents wanted to go on my motorbike years ago, and we did it. She get on, it was quite difficult to get them on, but we had one lady that rode on the back of my bike, and she just held around me. But we, because we were in Mote Park, we were on private roads.

00:01:52 - So, you could do that, really, it wasn't a major problem. But I don't know, if I had to risk assess myself now, I probably wouldn't let myself do it. But it was quite difficult. You know, things change nowadays.

00:02:05 - But yeah, I had a couple of residents who've actually taken a ride on my bike, a ride around the park. They just really wanted to go out and wanted to know what it felt like to go on a bike. And one of the ladies actually did that, Betty, who was a resident for many years, I mean, she was quite adventurous, quite a character.

[Text on screen: How have things changed over the years?]

00:02:24 - There's so many good things. I mean, you know, the equipment is fantastic, and things have changed from that point of view, and the accommodation, I mean, it's first class. I mean, when I think back, people would be actually horrified if they saw how people used to, but that's how people lived.

00:02:41 - People didn't even have televisions in their room when I first started. I mean, you were starting to get the odd portable television, but generally, people didn't and people had their little radios and transistors and things, and their headphones or their earplugs, and this type of thing. Yes, they didn't have that in their shared rooms.

00:03:00 - You had a lot of banter. You did have a lot of fun in the old days, 'cause you'd go into a room with six men, basically. There was curtains, bit like a hospital dormitory type room. And you'd be getting everybody

up, and everybody be chatting back and forth across the room. It was really good fun, a lot of banter and that type of thing. Sometimes, some arguments and "Shut up, turn the radio down." This type of thing. But, you know, it was quite good fun, and generally, people got on quite well.

00:03:23 - But it is nice to see single rooms and people having their own privacy and that type of thing. I mean, the jump, the massive leap we had, really, from moving from Mote House to here, I mean, we only had, in Mote

House, people mainly had baths still, but, I mean, we only had a few baths in the home. So it was one or two baths a week if you're lucky. We had one shower cubicle, which the shower turned, you ended up being pushed from your bedroom on the shower chair down about two corridors wrapped in towels to get to the shower. To have a shower, then to go back to your room to get dressed again, to get into your chair whereas now, we've obviously sudden leap forward.

00:04:01

We moved here in '95, to have your own en suite, you got hoists that go

straight over your toilet. You know, you got your shower, your own personal shower and everything's sort of, you know, massive leap forward.

[Text on screen: How was the move to Sobell Lodge?]

00:04:16 - It actually worked really well. I made sure I had plenty of staff on duty, and we sort of brought four people down and settled them in, because it's everything from putting pictures up to really making somebody feel at home, and getting everything unpacked.

00:04:29 - If everybody arrived all the same day, it would be total chaos. So, it worked really well. Yeah, that's sort of how we've done our original moves. We sort of started down South Lodge with the first floor and then the next floor, so we could move four at a time, and just had a little bit, sort of like a day or so, grace in between to give us a little time to get everybody settled. So, yeah it went really well.

00:04:52 - So, yeah, it was a bit difficult. While you're moving, we were still, in fact, the builders were behind schedule. That's I think normal with any build. So, we were trying to chase them out the other end of the building. So, we sort of started down south of the building moving people in, but we still had people decorating the north of the building. But they had finished the rooms down there, so we're sort of cleaning up after the builders and chasing them out, and trying to get everything set up.

00:05:15 - So, it was quite, yeah, quite entertaining. And they didn't have the phone lines put in initially. So, I was sitting in the car park when I was doing, in between my training sessions, trying to order supplies, 'cause I couldn't get a phone signal, 'cause the phone signal in Staplehurst for us at that time was quite poor in '95. The only way I could get a phone signal was take me desk and all me paper work and putting a desk in the middle of the car park, sitting in the car park and trying to order toilet rolls, all the essentials that we need for the home. I was placing all me orders out in the car park.

00:05:44 - So, we had no computers, no telephone line, nothing. So, I was trying to get everything ordered, and I was getting moaned at the home at the other end by the manager and the other home ringing me out saying, "I've been trying to contact you all morning." And of course my phone wasn't working. Soon as I came in to do training, or I was doing something else, my phone just lost signal. So I had to keep going out to see if I got any missed calls and if I got, if anybody wanted to contact me about anything.

00:06:09 - But, anyway, before we moved in, obviously, just as we were moving in, they started to get the phone lines up and running. Yeah, no, it was good. It was lovely when we started.

**End of transcription**