



Our History

Self Unlimited is the operating name for the charity Cottage and Rural Enterprises, or CARE, which was established in 1966 by Peter Forbes, an artist and visionary philanthropist who lived in Devon.

His idea was to establish a motivational residential environment that would help encourage people with learning disabilities to achieve their full potential.

He believed in three principles:

- 1 Everyone should be treated as an individual
- 2 Everyone should have a room of their own
- 3 Everyone should have a meaningful daytime activity, by which he meant doing something productive, like gardening, cooking or painting

As an artist, a lot of the activities organised involved arts and crafts, such as painting and pottery. The first CARE village was established in Blackerton, very near to Exmoor. In such a wonderfully rural environment, the villagers grew a lot of their own food, too, and sold produce and crafts to raise money to help the Charity grow.

Families of people with learning disabilities around the country became aware of what Peter had achieved at Blackerton and were keen to talk to him about setting up similar villages across England. And so, CARE was established in a further seven locations:

- 1 Blackerton near South Molton in Devon
- 2 Ponteland, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- 3 Stanley Grange, near Preston in Lancashire
- 4 Ironbridge, near the Iron Bridge in Shropshire
- 5 Shangton, near Market Harborough in Leicester
- 6 Ide Hill, near Sevenoaks in Kent
- 7 Walberton, near Arundel in West Sussex
- 8 Rowde, near Devizes in Wiltshire

Each village was very similar in construction, with houses set in beautiful landscaped grounds, each boasting rural workshops that became a hive of industry. With the general consensus in the 60s being that people with learning disabilities thrived in quiet, peaceful environments, many were built in the countryside, away from towns or villages.

Now, over forty years later, a more enlightened society encourages everyone, regardless of any disability, to enjoy increased access to all facilities and to be helped to take greater control over their lives. Already, this has seen the complete relocation of our Ide Hill site at Sevenoaks, from its remote site at the highest point in Kent surrounded by 42 acres of National Trust woodland to a range of accommodation options spread throughout the area together with day activities and a support hub on the outskirts of Edenbridge.

A complete review is now currently underway to ensure that we are meeting the needs of everyone who either uses our services across the country now, or will do so in the future. We are looking to increase the depth and breadth of our operations to give people increased choice and to support them to live life the way they want.

In 2007, it was finally decided that the name CARE no longer fully explained all that the Charity did. Although we still care and always will, the Charity aims to do much more for everyone using our services. A Corporate ID Working Group undertook a year-long project to research, analyse and, if appropriate, to rebrand the Charity.

And in spring 2008, feedback from our stakeholders, in particular our service users, supported the change of our operating name and corporate identity so that it now clearly represents the emphasis that the Charity has always placed on the individual and the opportunities we now aim to provide.

Elmtree Creative, designers introduced to the Charity by sponsors Autoglass, gave their time and expertise pro bono and were an inspirational force behind the whole project, while brand specialists, Base One, helped us with the extremely difficult task of identifying a suitable name. The Trustees, together with service user representatives, gave their final approval at a meeting held in September 2008.

Finally, on 18 December, at a Reception held in Goldsmiths Hall in London, it was formally announced that CARE would be using the operating name of Self Unlimited from now on; a name that means a lot to the Charity Self because we have always treated each person as an individual; and Unlimited because we believe that people should have no boundaries to their achievements, other than those they set themselves.

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