

Care That Lasts

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Editor's Note



Welcome to the April edition of Care Talk

Spring is finally starting to show itself – longer days, brighter mornings and those first hints of green returning. It's a time that naturally makes us think about renewal and fresh starts.

In social care, though, that sense of optimism sits alongside some very real pressures. Rising costs and ongoing financial challenges continue to shape how services are run and how care is delivered day to day.

At the same time, Baroness Casey's recent speech at the Nuffield Trust Summit has put social care firmly back in the spotlight. Her call for a national "moment of reckoning" – and the reminder that social care has never had a clear founding vision like the NHS – feels particularly timely. With the Casey Commission now underway, there's a growing sense that change is not just needed, but expected.

Against this backdrop, the idea of *Care That Lasts* feels more important than ever – and it runs throughout this issue. We explore what sustainable care looks like in practice, from low-carbon housing with Inspired Villages to greener kitchens with Creed Foodservice, alongside circular approaches from Grace Cares and Oakland Care. Camphill Village Trust highlights community-led action, while The Care Workers' Charity reminds us that sustainability must include the workforce too.

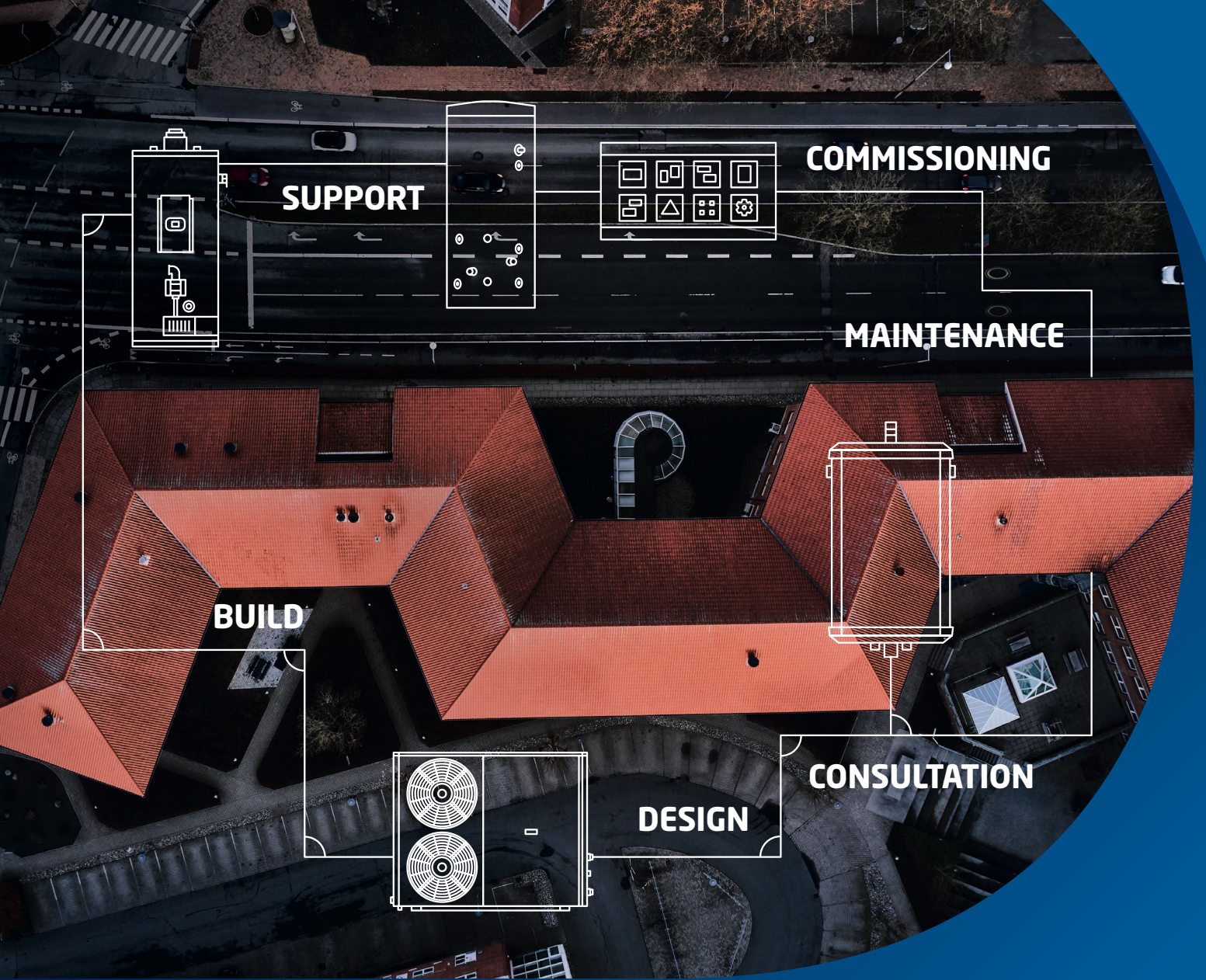
Spring reminds us that change doesn't happen overnight. In social care, it's the small, thoughtful steps – taken consistently – that make the biggest difference.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Till next time,

Lisa

@lisa_caretalk



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Sustainability in Practice



Professor Martin Green OBE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
CARE ENGLAND

Professor Martin Green, Chief Executive of Care England, explores the growing pressure on care providers to meet sustainability goals while navigating rising costs, shifting government policy and an already underfunded sector.



Politicians promise 'jam tomorrow' on clean energy while providers pay today.



Sustainability and the green agenda are increasingly becoming a focal point for care homes in England. In recent years, successive governments have imposed legal requirements on all of us to become more environmentally sustainable, which has had a significant cost impact on care providers. One of the many problems we face is that government policy in this area is subject to change, and, as always, the government expects the sector to shoulder the financial responsibility for a policy that may change if the government changes.

I think we can all remember when the government told us to buy diesel cars because they were more environmentally friendly. Once we did this, they raised diesel prices and then told us they had made a mistake and that we would have to pay more.

With this history and the emerging differences among parties, care providers are reluctant to invest large sums of money in something that may not be required in the future.

All that said, as the demand for care rises, so too does the potential environmental impact of care services. This means that care providers must balance the need for environmentally responsible practices with the needs of people who use the service. We are always told that the green agenda will deliver cheaper clean energy, but we never see any evidence of this, and politicians are very good at giving us a story of “jam tomorrow” whilst making us pay through the nose for what we have today.

A comprehensive approach to sustainability encompasses several key aspects, including energy efficiency, waste management, material sourcing, and community engagement.

One of the first ways to promote sustainability in care homes is by improving energy efficiency. The benefit of doing this should be cheaper energy bills, and anything that reduces costs in a very pressurised sector is to be welcomed. Many facilities have begun implementing simple changes such as LED lighting, energy-efficient heating systems, and smart thermostats. These upgrades not only reduce energy consumption but also lower operational costs, allowing funds to be redirected to resident care. Though it must be remembered that some of these low-level changes still require capital investment, one way governments could help the sector is by offering capital grants or significant tax cuts for people who engage in this agenda.

Renewable energy sources are now gaining traction; solar panels, for instance, can provide a significant portion of a care home's energy needs, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. It is true that the government has incentivised the adoption of renewable energy through various grants and funding programs, making it more feasible for care homes to transition to greener energy sources, but if the government continues to underfund care, there will be less money available for this type of investment.

Effective waste management is another component of the green agenda for care homes. The healthcare sector generates a substantial amount of waste, including hazardous materials, which must be disposed of properly. Care homes are increasingly adopting comprehensive recycling programs that sort waste into recyclable, compostable, and general waste categories. Many of these waste management requirements entail high extra costs, and if the government really wants to cut down on waste, it should consider how it incentivises waste management rather than always resorting to penalising people and increasing their costs.

Sustainable sourcing of materials is essential in building and renovating care homes. Many facilities are now prioritising eco-friendly materials with lower environmental impact. This includes using sustainable timber, sustainably produced paints, and recycled materials in construction and interior design.

Furthermore, care homes are increasingly opting for locally sourced products to support the local economy and reduce transportation emissions. This approach not only fosters community ties but also ensures that the materials and products used are fresh and often healthier for residents.

Water conservation is also a key element of care homes' environmental strategies. Care homes use a lot of water, often associated with infection control and activities of daily living. Strategies to reduce water consumption include installing low-flow fixtures, implementing rainwater harvesting systems, and creating awareness among staff and residents about the importance of water conservation. Given the increasing pressures on water resources, these practices can significantly reduce water usage and costs.

Sustainability in care homes extends beyond the physical building and operations; it also involves engaging the community. Many care homes are fostering partnerships with local organisations to promote environmental initiatives. This can include community gardening projects, where residents plant and maintain gardens, providing fresh produce and enhancing their mental well-being.

Additionally, educational programs for residents and staff on sustainability practices can foster a culture of environmental responsibility. When residents participate in sustainability initiatives, they often find renewed purpose and a stronger connection to the community.

The sustainability and green agendas are being embraced by many care homes. But we should not underestimate the challenges we face in a sector that is underfunded and heavily regulated. If the government is really committed to long-term sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of the care sector, it must develop a comprehensive plan, backed by significant capital, to ensure that all care services are as environmentally friendly as possible. Unless the government also attends to the issue of underfunding care packages, there will be little or no resources available to pursue other agendas, such as sustainability.

 [careengland.org.uk](https://www.careengland.org.uk)



*The government
expects the sector to
shoulder the financial
responsibility for
a policy that
may change.*



Greening Care with Small Steps



Robin Asquith
HEAD OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
CAMPHILL VILLAGE TRUST

Robin Asquith, Head of the Natural Environment at Camphill Village Trust, explains how small, practical environmental actions — from composting to community-led initiatives — can make care settings greener while strengthening wellbeing, connection and shared responsibility.



Sustainability becomes everyday — and it's these small everyday actions which make the difference.



Stewardship of the natural environment is rooted deeply in the 70-year history of Camphill Village Trust. With over 900 acres of land and a heritage including practices like biodynamic social farming, we have a unique opportunity to transform the health and wellbeing of the people we support through a connection to nature. With that comes a deep responsibility to care for the land which helps us flourish.

In our latest Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) statement, we documented 341 hectares of sustainable land management schemes, 75 hectares of woodland and 2.65 tCO₂e carbon footprint per service user. We measure this data annually to track progress and inform our journey to carbon neutrality.

Yet with nine communities across England, and many different landscapes and properties to look after, making a positive environmental difference is a complex undertaking. As an organisation, there is much more to do, but we are finding success through small initiatives, powered by local partnerships, which get everyone involved.

Food waste offers one of the clearest opportunities to make a difference. Food waste is responsible for 8–10% of global greenhouse gas emissions (UNEP, Food Waste Index 2024). From the energy needed to transport waste to landfill, to the methane produced by improper disposal, stopping food entering general waste reduces emissions and creates many benefits.

We have had great success with our composting programmes, involving people we support, team members and volunteers in efforts to ensure food waste is redirected to compost where it can do good instead of harm. Composting means healthier soil, lower spend on bought compost (delivered by road and often peat-based) and great yields from allotments. At Botton Village, we now produce 40–50% of our compost, with plans to achieve 75–80%.

To make this possible, we have worked to make composting more accessible. With materials from a Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant and the help of students from Middlesbrough College, community members co-designed compost bins for people with mobility needs. But not every site needs a “compost palace” like ours. Low-cost options are readily available, and free bins can be built from materials such as salvaged pallets.

This programme shows the value of cultivating green spaces where food waste can be composted, cardboard repurposed as mulch and weed suppressant, biodiversity allowed to flourish and people supported to develop a stronger connection to nature. Even a small urban planter can create valuable habitat for pollinators.

Lighting has been another low-cost win. We have been installing DarkSky-compliant, low-energy fittings, cutting energy use while reducing light pollution and supporting wildlife. So far, the North York Moors National Park has funded 75% of the cost. People we support were involved in the project too, testing and feeding back on fittings before installation.

Greening care settings is not always straightforward. Many sustainable improvements require upfront investment, and financial pressure can make this difficult. Staff turnover can disrupt momentum, while misconceptions — such as resistance to electric vehicles or concerns about “dirty” vegetables — can slow change. When energy bills are paid centrally, frontline teams do not always see the impact of everyday choices.

Partnerships help us meet these challenges. Colleges, providers, local businesses and grant funders have supported everything from compost bays to courtyard transformations, often at little or no cost.

Partnership with community members and colleagues is equally vital. Our “Dragon’s Dell” microgrants invited people we support to pitch ideas for improving their local environment. Winning projects included clothes recycling schemes and special bins. When people see their ideas come to life, they take ownership and inspire others.

When someone carries their caddy to the compost bay or helps choose a light fitting, sustainability becomes part of everyday life. Over time, it is these small actions that make the biggest difference.



*Small initiatives, powered
by local partnerships,
get everyone involved.*



Further reading

Camphill Village Trust – Environmental & Sustainability Work
camphillvillagetrust.org.uk/what-we-do/initiatives/esg-in-action/

UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024
unep.org/resources/report/food-waste-index-report-2024

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
gov.uk/guidance/farming-in-protected-landscapes-programme

Sustainable Care Starts on the Frontline



Karolina Gerlich

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
THE CARE WORKERS' CHARITY

Karolina Gerlich, Chief Executive at The Care Workers' Charity, argues that sustainability in social care will only succeed if care workers are actively involved in shaping it, drawing on the frontline insight that turns environmental ambitions into everyday practice.

The Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Single Assessment Framework now includes an environmental sustainability quality statement under the "well-led" key question, and while formal assessment is still focused on NHS trusts and integrated care systems, the expectation is clearly expanding. Providers across social care are being asked to understand their environmental impact and show what they are doing about it. That is a reasonable ask. But it raises a more fundamental question: who, within a care organisation, is actually in a position to make sustainability real?

The answer is care teams. Environmental sustainability in care services cannot be achieved without the people delivering care on board, not as passive recipients of another new policy, but as the people shaping what it looks like day to day. Care workers see what gets wasted. They know which lights stay on in empty rooms, which meals come back untouched, which supplies arrive over-packaged and under-used. They understand the rhythms and routines of a service in ways that no top-down strategy document ever could. If sustainability is going to mean anything beyond a paragraph in an annual report, it has to start with those insights.

That means co-production. We talk in social care about designing services with people rather than for them, and the same principle applies here. Asking care teams what they would change, what frustrates them about waste, what small shifts might make a difference is not just good practice. It is the only approach that will stick. Sustainability shaped with care workers becomes part of how a service thinks and operates.

This conversation also needs to reach beyond residential settings. The challenges are different, but the principle is the same. If we want greener practice in homecare, we need to be having honest conversations with the people doing the work about what is realistic, what support they need and where the quick wins might be. This includes route planning, reducing single-use products, working with people who draw on care to think about small household-level changes together.



Care workers see what gets wasted and where small changes could make a real difference.



At the centre of all of this are professional care workers themselves. Asking them to take on a green agenda without resourcing it properly, without listening to them, without recognising the expertise they already bring would be repeating a pattern the sector knows all too well. But done differently, done with genuine co-production and respect for professional judgement, sustainability could be something care workers feel ownership of.

Social care has always been resourceful. Providers and care workers have spent years doing extraordinary things with very little. The green agenda does not need to feel like one more weight on already tired shoulders. It can be an extension of what the sector does best: making the most of what is available, wasting less, thinking ahead and putting people at the heart of every decision. But only if we start by asking the right people the right questions.

“Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care isn’t just a celebration — it’s a movement.”



WAGS

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Greener Kitchens in Care



CREED
THE FOODSERVICE COMPANY

Andy Williams

SENIOR NATIONAL SALES MANAGER
CREED FOODSERVICE

Andy Williams, care expert and Senior National Sales Manager for Creed Foodservice, explores how food sourcing, supplier partnerships and practical kitchen changes are helping care providers introduce sustainability without compromising resident care.



Creed electric vehicle delivering to customers



Sustainable care catering often begins with better sourcing and stronger supplier partnerships.



Consideration for sustainable practices has become the status quo in the hospitality and education sectors, but historically this has not always been front of mind in care catering. For many care providers, the primary focus has understandably been on delivering excellent resident care and the additional services that support quality of life, often against a challenging backdrop of increasing costs and tight budgets. However, as expectations evolve and a new generation of residents comes through, sustainability is beginning to move up the agenda.

At Creed Foodservice, we are seeing this shift first-hand. The key challenge now is helping operators embed practices in ways that are practical, cost-effective and aligned with the needs of residents. Across the sector there is still a real disparity in how far organisations have progressed. Some groups are leading the way with structured initiatives, while others are only beginning to explore what sustainability might look like within their homes.

Coate Water Care in Swindon is a strong example of a care business beginning to address sustainability at an operational level. The organisation has introduced ‘Sustainability Champions’ across its homes, with each site nominating a team member who has received training on reducing energy usage, improving recycling and identifying opportunities to cut waste. These champions develop sustainability action plans and work with colleagues, residents and families to implement change, helping to make sustainability more visible and achievable within everyday care home operations.

While ‘sustainability’ is often used as a catch-all phrase, in practice it involves many different elements. Food sourcing and provenance are two areas that increasingly sit front of mind for progressive homes. Care operators are asking more questions about food miles and where products come from. At Creed, we work closely with trusted suppliers to ensure transparency and ethical sourcing, and many of the products used in care settings already meet recognised standards such as Red Tractor accredited meat. Maintaining these assurances is important not only for sustainability, but also for quality and trust.

Menu development is another area where change is beginning to emerge. As the population ages, the next generation of residents will bring different expectations around food, including greater interest in plant-based dishes and more varied menus. While nutritional requirements will always remain the priority in care catering, introducing plant-forward dishes and seasonal ingredients can support both health and environmental goals.

Because sustainability can feel like a large and sometimes overwhelming topic, starting with small practical steps is often the most effective approach. Waste management is one area where meaningful progress can be made quickly. Through Creed’s partnership with Olleco, we help chefs safely dispose of used cooking oil and food waste, which are then recycled into sustainable resources such as biodiesel. Increasingly, homes are also exploring waste monitoring programmes that help kitchen teams understand where waste occurs and how it can be reduced.

Supporting teams with practical guidance is also important. At Creed, we regularly work with care teams through seminars, training sessions and guidance that focus on both sustainability and the wider dining experience. Providing chefs with the right skills, knowledge and practical tools helps ensure sustainability initiatives support — rather than compromise — nutritional care. Residents themselves often play an important role in shaping greener care cultures within homes. Many care settings already have gardens where herbs or vegetables are grown, and involving residents in menu discussions or food-related activities can create meaningful engagement around meals while even increasing calorie consumption. Food remains a powerful connector in care environments, whether through shared cooking experiences, barbecues or themed dining events that encourage conversation and enjoyment.

Sustainability in care catering will not happen overnight, particularly in older buildings or more complex environments where operational constraints can be significant. But the direction of travel is clear. As operators share ideas, introduce practical changes and work more closely with suppliers, sustainability is becoming a more visible part of everyday care catering.

For care caterers, the key message is that progress does not need to start with major investment. Often it begins with awareness, collaboration and practical initiatives that bring teams, residents and suppliers together. With the right support, sustainable food practices can become a natural part of delivering high-quality, future-focused care catering.

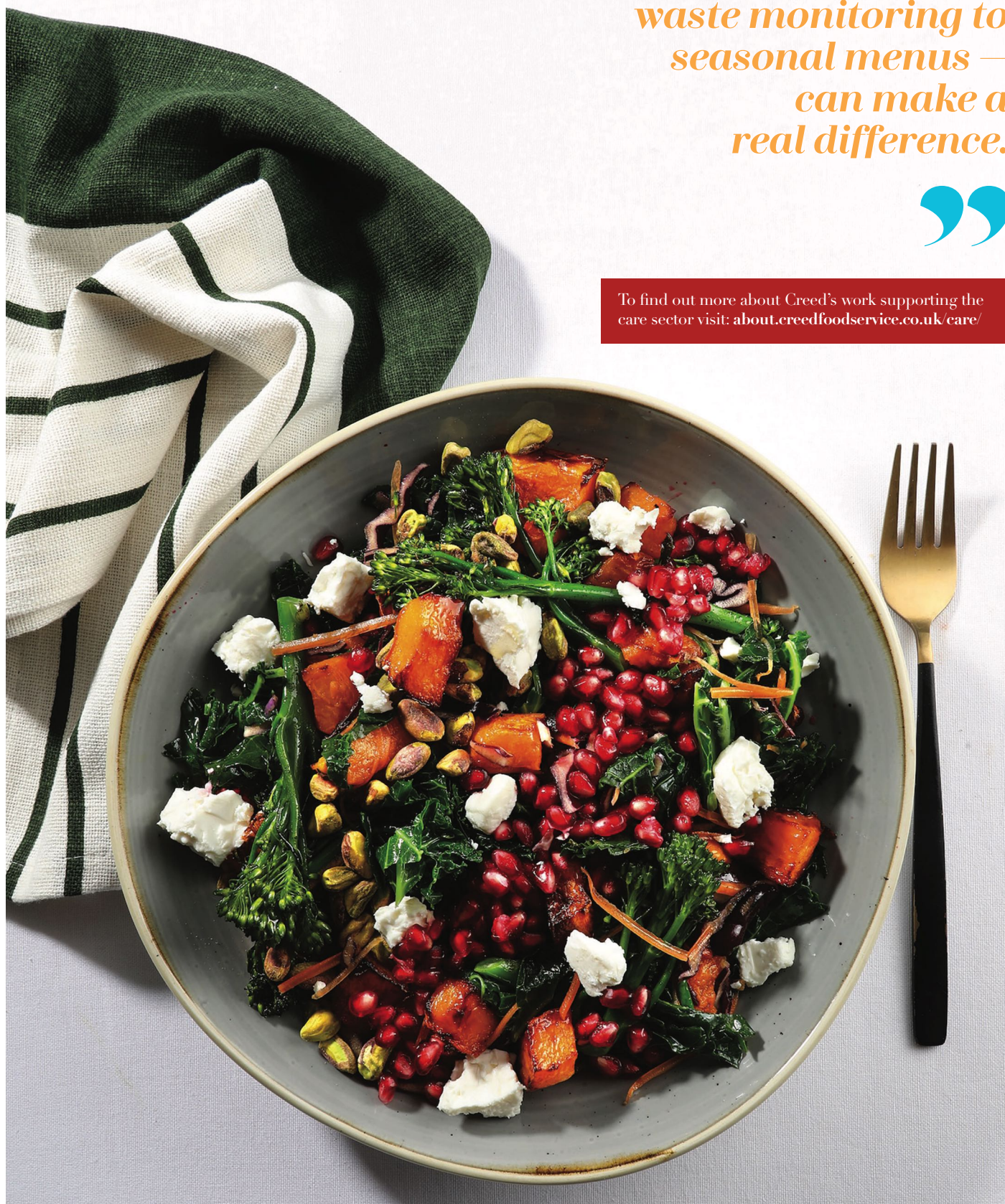
 creedfoodservice.co.uk



*Small changes
in kitchens – from
waste monitoring to
seasonal menus –
can make a
real difference.*



To find out more about Creed's work supporting the care sector visit: about.creedfoodservice.co.uk/care/



Low-Carbon Living for Later Life



Inspired Villages
Sonia Parol
DESIGN DIRECTOR
INSPIRED VILLAGES

Sonia Parol, Design Director at retirement village developer and operator Inspired Villages, explains how low-carbon design can create comfortable, future-proofed homes while supporting independence and wellbeing in later living communities.



Energy-efficient, future-proofed homes protect residents from rising energy costs.



At Inspired Villages, we are climate-conscious and fully committed to delivering net-zero carbon regulated energy retirement communities. Our last three new openings were delivered at net zero carbon (regulated) standard. While this added to construction costs, we see this as an investment in creating the right living environment for our residents – supporting comfort, wellbeing and long-term supported independence.

Low-carbon design is not only important for residents in their day-to-day lives, but also a sound long-term investment. Energy-efficient, future-proofed homes protect residents from rising energy costs and reduce the risk of homes becoming harder to sell in future as standards and market expectations continue to increase.

Designing homes that combine environmental responsibility with comfort, independence and choice is therefore central to the future of housing with care.

Our first and most impactful approach to delivering low-carbon development is a fabric-first strategy – high levels of insulation and airtightness. This delivers long-term benefits and should always be the starting point for new developments and major refurbishments. We complement this with low-carbon heating solutions, including ground source and air source heat pumps, alongside the extensive use of on-site renewables such as solar PV. These technologies help future-proof our communities while ensuring residents benefit from reliable, efficient energy systems.



Importantly, these approaches are not limited to new developments. Many sustainability measures can also be applied, where appropriate, to existing schemes.

In our older villages, retrofit programmes focus on delivering improvements while minimising disruption for residents. Clear communication in advance is essential, ensuring residents understand why works are taking place and how they will benefit. We prioritise external measures and communal infrastructure upgrades – such as PV panels, fabric improvements and plant room upgrades – to minimise the impact on daily life.

Alongside larger infrastructure changes, everyday practical measures play an important role in reducing environmental impact while supporting resident wellbeing. Low-flow taps and showers, low-energy lighting and efficient appliances all contribute to reducing energy and water consumption. Biodiversity measures such as planting, habitat creation and sustainable drainage systems are now planning requirements, but we aim to exceed minimum standards across our schemes to create healthier, greener environments. In some cases, the landscaping itself has been one of the reasons residents chose to buy a property in the village.

What sets us apart from some developers is that we do not rely on offsetting to claim sustainability credentials. Instead, we focus on genuinely delivering low-carbon villages.

By prioritising strong building fabric performance, efficient heating systems and low-energy fittings and appliances, we directly reduce running costs and improve comfort. This approach avoids reliance on complex technical solutions that may be expensive to maintain or replace in the future and helps ensure sustainability improvements do not leave residents financially worse off over time.

Affordability remains a key consideration for residents, many of whom are living on fixed or lower incomes. For sustainability measures to succeed, they must deliver practical benefits in everyday living. By focusing on efficiency and long-term performance, low-carbon design can help stabilise running costs while improving comfort and resilience.

Looking ahead, greater national consistency would significantly help the sector accelerate delivery of low-carbon homes for an ageing population. In particular, clearer national policy on the future of heat – including heat networks, heat pumps and hydrogen readiness – would provide confidence for long-term investment. Upgrades to local electricity networks are also needed to support the electrification of heating in later living developments. Finally, tighter minimum energy performance standards for new homes and major refurbishments, alongside stronger enforcement of “as-built” performance, would help ensure that design intent translates into real-world outcomes.

Delivering warm, safe and low-carbon homes for an ageing population will require collaboration between developers, operators, policymakers and residents themselves. By embedding sustainability into design, operations and everyday living, housing with care communities can play a vital role in supporting both environmental responsibility and long-term wellbeing.

 inspiredvillages.co.uk



Low-carbon design supports comfort, wellbeing and long-term independence for residents.



*Millfield Green,
the UK's first Net Zero
(regulated energy)
retirement community*



Smarter Procurement for Sustainable Care



Aaron White
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SUSTAINABILITY
OAKLAND CARE

Aaron White, Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Sustainability at Oakland Care, explores how procurement choices, supplier partnerships and everyday operational decisions can help care providers reduce waste, lower costs and cut environmental impact.



The biggest environmental impact for providers often sits within their supply chains.



Aaron White is Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Sustainability at Oakland Care. He is a graduate of Environmental Management from Durham University and has worked in the care sector for almost 15 years in various management roles at both home and regional levels.

White plays a key role in overseeing the implementation of systems and processes throughout the Oakland Care Group, from IT infrastructure to systems, equipment and waste management. This includes during the building and commissioning of new homes where he focuses on ensuring that homes operate effectively and efficiently.

Integral to his work is driving forward the implementation of Oakland Care's sustainability strategy in every aspect of operations, ensuring that the business is future-proofed and delivering its services sustainably.

Across the sector, care providers are recognising a need to reduce their environmental impact. However, the challenge is often how to balance this with factors such as cost, the continued delivery of high-quality care and growing demand for services. As a result, many remain heavily reliant on standard operational models and the security that comes from the familiar:

But providers must look beyond this and begin embedding circular economy principles. This is not only a pathway to reduce emissions; it can also ease pressure on budgets and support resilience for the future. To have the greatest impact, however, circular thinking cannot be considered in isolation. It must be embedded within a wider sustainability strategy where environmental considerations are applied at every opportunity.

In 2020, Oakland Care took its first steps on its own 'green' journey. Since then, we have become the first care home group in Britain to be certified as a carbon neutral business and have continued to lead the way within the sector when it comes to sustainability.

A key part of our strategy has been transforming our procurement and supply chain processes. Circular economy principles have been steadily embedded over the last five years across each of our homes. While we have a bold strategy that we are delivering against, at a practical level we champion the familiar 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' model.

For example, we have introduced a circular computing model which involves acquiring recycled laptops rather than buying new equipment each time, replacing technology only when it is necessary. This has reduced our carbon footprint in this area by 93%.

Within our kitchens we are using a tool that has reduced the amount of oil we use by 20%. Across our homes we have also changed the types of toilet roll and kitchen towel used, opting for products made from recycled materials and without colouring dyes.

Recycling systems operate across all homes, and teams are encouraged to build local links with charities that can benefit from donations. It is important that staff see these changes and feel part of the process. This helps generate new ideas and ways of improving how homes operate sustainably, with every home, department and team member encouraged to make suggestions through initiatives such as our Green Committee.

The committee, composed of two representatives from each of our homes, provides a platform for sharing ideas and examples of best practice within their communities. This is reinforced with insight and advice from head office teams across different departments.

Tracking these processes is also critical. Carbon footprint measurement has been an integral part of our sustainability journey, supported by systems such as asset management trackers and waste management platforms.

Much of a provider's environmental impact sits within its supply chain, where embedded carbon and resource use are significant. This means meaningful progress cannot happen in isolation and depends on working in partnership with suppliers.

Alongside quality and price, sustainability is a key credential we assess during tenders and embed within contracts. We also build on this by setting shared sustainability expectations, collaborating on lower-carbon product development and increasing transparency around Scope 3 emissions.

Each year we hold a conference with suppliers to discuss opportunities for improvement, with a strong focus on sustainability. We also remain open to working with new suppliers who offer greener, more sustainable products.

One challenge we have faced is that many suppliers offering more sustainable products are SMEs. Compared with larger suppliers this can affect delivery times, but we have found this manageable and worthwhile. It is easy to choose the simpler route, but remaining committed to sustainability is important.

From our experience, larger suppliers often respond positively and seek to build relationships with these smaller businesses to stock their products themselves.

Cost is another consideration. However, there is growing positive momentum across the industry and supply chain, meaning the need to balance sustainability and affordability is becoming less restrictive.

Ultimately, circularity is not about compromising quality of care. It is about refining systems to deliver better outcomes with fewer resources. Done well, it strengthens resilience against supply shocks, reduces long-term costs and supports future-proofed care delivery.

As net zero targets approach and regulatory scrutiny increases, the question for providers should increasingly shift from whether circular approaches are possible to how quickly they can be embedded into everyday practice.

 [oaklandcare.com](https://www.oaklandcare.com)



Sustainability in care starts with everyday decisions about what we buy and who we buy from.



The Circular Economy of Care



GraceCares
Pre-Loved Care Equipment

Hannah Montgomery

FOUNDER
GRACE CARES

Hannah Montgomery, Founder of Grace Cares, explores how reusing, repairing and redistributing care equipment can reduce waste, cut costs and strengthen sustainability across the sector.



Every £1 generated through the Grace Cares model delivers between £4 and £7 of social value.



Care providers are under constant pressure. Tight margins, workforce shortages, rising compliance expectations and increasing operating costs all make everyday decisions feel high stakes. One area often overlooked, however, is the hidden cost – and risk – of how care equipment is managed.

Across care homes, home care services, supported living, extra care housing, respite and reablement settings, large volumes of usable equipment are routinely discarded. Beds replaced during refurbishment, wheelchairs following a resident's death, and surplus aids after changing needs or short-term placements too often go straight into a skip, at a cost to both the provider and the environment. This linear “buy, use, dispose” model no longer stacks up.

A circular economy approach in care means keeping essential equipment in use for as long as it is safe and appropriate to do so. Through community-based reuse schemes such as Grace Cares, unwanted equipment is professionally cleaned, safety tested and refurbished where needed before being reintroduced into circulation at a fraction of the cost of new. This reduces waste, avoids unnecessary replacement costs and supports a more resilient care system. When supply chains failed during Covid-19, services with access to reused and refurbished stock were better able to maintain safe, continuous care. Circular care is therefore not just about sustainability – it is about business continuity.

Care equipment also carries a significant environmental footprint once raw materials, manufacturing and transport are taken into account. Discarding usable items and replacing them with new effectively doubles that impact. Repeated across beds, mattresses, hoists and mobility aids used throughout regulated care settings, this pattern contributes to landfill, carbon emissions and unnecessary waste. Reuse avoids that harm entirely while supporting more responsible resource management.

Care providers working with reuse partners consistently report significant savings by sourcing refurbished equipment rather than buying new. These savings support financial resilience at a time when every line of expenditure is under scrutiny. As one care home chief executive explains:

“Grace Cares don’t just supply – they collaborate. It’s a smart, sustainable partnership that supports compliance, profitability and purpose.”

There is also a clear alignment with expectations around leadership, governance and sustainability. Demonstrating responsible resource management, carbon awareness and social impact increasingly forms part of what good leadership looks like, particularly for owners, managers and finance leads accountable for long-term viability.

Circular care also creates measurable social value – something that is increasingly material for care providers. Banks, lenders, local authorities and commissioners now routinely ask providers to evidence social value and environmental impact as part of tenders, funding applications and refinancing discussions. This is no longer a narrative exercise; it is increasingly scored and weighted.

Independent analysis shows that every £1 generated through the Grace Cares model delivers between £4 and £7 of social value. As a not-for-profit organisation, all income is reinvested into supporting care providers to evidence environmental sustainability, and into grants that help unpaid caregivers and older people afford and access care. For providers, this strengthens ESG reporting, supports competitive bids and demonstrates leadership rooted in real outcomes.

Embedding circular economy thinking does not require radical change. It starts with practical decisions such as questioning disposal as the default option, planning reuse alongside procurement, and capturing cost, carbon and social value impacts.

Circular care offers a rare triple win – reducing expenditure, strengthening resilience and improving sustainability. In a sector built on care, responsibility and stewardship, keeping vital equipment in circulation is not just good practice. It is good leadership.



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30 Years of Putting People First

Now General Manager of Rectory Court and Leah Lodge in Blackheath, London, Sue has built a career defined by compassion, consistency and a genuine commitment to people.

For Sue, care has never just been a job — it's something she's grown into over time. She's developed her skills, gone back into education and stepped into leadership roles across both local authority and private sector care. But one thing has never changed: her focus on people and getting the basics right.

"I've always believed it's the little things that matter," she says. "Taking the time to listen, understanding what makes someone feel comfortable — that's what builds trust."

That belief runs through everything she does. Sue is known for her open-door style — visible, approachable and always ready for a conversation. Whether it's a quick check-in, a concern that needs addressing or simply offering reassurance, residents and families know they'll be heard.

"We want people to feel like they belong here," she says. "It's not just about care — it's about connection, familiarity and feeling valued."

Creating that sense of community is a big part of Sue's approach. She encourages her team to think beyond tasks and routines, focusing instead on how each interaction makes someone feel. It's about building relationships, not just delivering care.

Sue also has a particular passion for dementia care, backed by advanced training and specialist qualifications, including dementia mapping through Bradford University. She has previously been recognised with a Butterfly Award from dementia specialist David Sheard. But for Sue, it's never been about recognition — it's about understanding the person behind the condition.

"Choosing care for a loved one is deeply personal," she says. "Families need to know that person will be supported with empathy, dignity and consistency every single day."



Sue Hill
GENERAL MANAGER
RECTORY COURT AND
LEAH LODGE CARE HOMES
CINNAMON CARE COLLECTION



How Sue Hill, General Manager at a Cinnamon Care Collection home, has spent 30 years building a leadership approach rooted in compassion, connection and putting people first.



That attention to detail carries through into everyday life across the homes. From creating a warm, engaging environment to making sure residents can continue enjoying the things they love, Sue and her team focus on keeping life as normal — and as personal — as possible.

Even mealtimes are approached with the same care. Residents on modified diets can still enjoy meals from the full menu, thanks to specialist training in International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) standards. *"Food is such an important part of daily life," Sue says. "Everyone deserves to enjoy it, whatever their needs."*



Sue Hill didn't set out to run two care homes — she started as a care assistant.



Alongside her professional life, Sue has built a full and busy life outside of care. She has been married to her husband Adrian, a teacher, for over 30 years, and they have two sons — one training to be a solicitor and the other a nuclear engineer. In rare moments of downtime, she enjoys collecting designer handbags.

While recognition is always welcome, Sue is quick to bring the focus back to what really matters. *"The real reward is seeing residents and their families happy and thriving," she says.*

After three decades in care, that sense of purpose is still what drives her. Her journey — from care assistant to care leader — is a reminder that great care isn't about titles or accolades. It's about showing up, every day, with compassion, consistency and heart.

After the Diagnosis, Everything Changed



Victoria Orsini

OLIVER MCGOWAN FACILITATOR TRAINER
YOGA TEACHER AND SPECIALIST
AUTISM TRAINER

How Victoria Orsini, an Oliver McGowan Facilitator Trainer at Autism Hampshire, turned a late autism diagnosis into a mission to help others feel seen and supported.

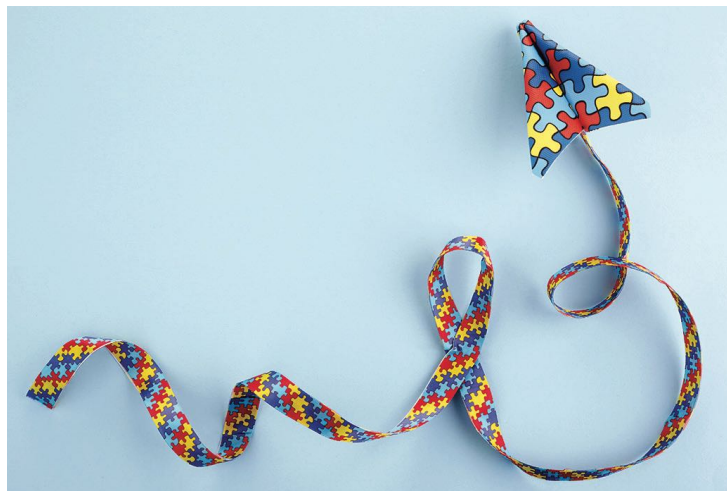
After being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD), a further assessment was suggested. What followed was a moment of clarity that led her to completely review every aspect of her life.

Having been permanently excluded from school and, like so many neurodivergent adults, labelled in ways that were often erroneous and unkind, the diagnosis finally helped things make sense. It marked a turning point — not just personally, but professionally too. For the first time, experiences that had felt confusing or isolating were reframed with understanding.

Before this, Victoria had built a successful career in ethical investment research, working in the sector for 12 years and being published in the *Financial Times*, *Charity Times* and *Third Sector* magazines. Alongside this, she had always felt a strong pull to give back to the community, inspired in part by her parents' own commitment to volunteering. Her father, Christopher Woodbridge, was a Board Member of Age UK for many years, and her mother also volunteered for many years at a Princess Alice shop. That sense of wanting to make a difference stayed with her.

She became a Trustee with MIND in Kingston and, over the years, gained a counselling qualification to complement her Psychology degree. She also volunteered at a Rape Crisis Centre, a GP surgery and with Victim Support — experiences that deepened her understanding of people and strengthened her desire to support others.

Following her diagnosis six years ago, Victoria began to focus on autism and neurodivergence more widely. Today, she works with Autism Hampshire as a Specialist Autism Trainer, supporting parents of recently diagnosed children, adults and teachers referred through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Her lived experience, combined with her professional background and clear memories of her own journey, allows her to connect with audiences in a meaningful and engaging way.



She has written a training module for the leisure sector in Hampshire and has delivered training in private hospitals, helping professionals better understand the autistic experience and the importance of adapting environments and communication.

Victoria is also an Oliver McGowan Trainer Facilitator, delivering vital mandatory training on autism and learning disabilities to NHS staff. This involves working with groups of around 30 healthcare professionals at a time, combining course content with lived experience to challenge assumptions and improve understanding. The training plays an important role in breaking down barriers to healthcare that contribute to poorer outcomes and lower life expectancy for autistic people and those with learning disabilities.

Alongside this, Victoria has drawn on her yoga teacher qualification to rethink traditional approaches, adapting sessions to better suit a neurodivergent audience. She also delivers chair yoga sessions in care homes, offering residents opportunities to

engage in movement, breathwork, aromatherapy, singing and dancing. These sessions are designed not just for physical wellbeing, but to lift mood and create moments of connection.

She is deeply committed to her “crew” of older people, and her sessions are as much about joy and engagement as they are about routine and structure. They rarely fail to bring smiles to everyone’s faces.

Now, Victoria is developing a consultancy to support parents of autistic children, helping them better understand what being autistic means and how to support their children in a way that reflects their individual needs. Her focus remains on creating greater awareness of autistic culture, communication differences, sensory processing and the importance of predictability and routine.

What began as a late diagnosis has become a new direction — one rooted in lived experience, empathy and a determination to make things better for others. It is also a reminder of how many people may go through life misunderstood, and how powerful it can be when understanding finally arrives.



Before this, Victoria had built a successful career in ethical investment research.



Music Speaks Louder Than Words



Olumide Dada

HOME CARER
BLOSSOM HOME CARE DURHAM



How Olumide Dada, a home carer at Blossom Home Care Durham, is using music and meaningful connection to transform everyday care into something deeply personal and uplifting.



Sometimes the most meaningful connection doesn't start with words — it starts with a song.



For Olumide Dada, care is about far more than completing tasks — it's about connection. And sometimes, that connection starts with something as simple as a song.

When Olumide joined Blossom Home Care Durham 18 months ago, he brought with him valuable experience as a carer. But what has set him apart since is not just his professionalism or reliability — it's his ability to turn everyday care into something meaningful, uplifting and deeply human.

From the moment he arrives, clients are greeted with a warm smile and an energy that immediately puts them at ease. Whether it's a routine visit or a more complex care situation, Olumide approaches every interaction with patience, respect and genuine joy.

Colleagues notice it too. One shared: *"I hadn't worked with Olumide for a few weeks but was lucky to join him on a couple of double-up visits recently. It was a lovely reminder of what a professional, courteous and hardworking colleague he is. He's always kind to clients too."*

But what truly makes Olumide stand out is how he uses music as part of his care. For him, singing isn't just a way to pass the time — it's a powerful tool for building trust, lifting mood and creating moments of connection that go far beyond traditional care approaches.

This approach has its roots in his previous role, where he supported a client whose relationship with their family had become strained. Communication was limited, and there was a clear emotional distance.

By introducing music, Olumide found a way to reach the client where words had struggled. Singing became a bridge — helping the individual express themselves, improving their mood and gradually encouraging more positive interactions with their family. Over time, this simple but powerful approach helped rebuild trust, strengthening relationships and bringing a renewed sense of happiness and unity.

Now at Blossom, he continues to bring that same philosophy into his work. One client in particular looks forward to his visits not just for the care provided, but for the joy he brings. Singing their favourite songs together has become a highlight — a shared moment that lifts spirits and creates a genuine bond.

"It was clear that this client required support that extended beyond the norm," Olumide explains. *"I focused on building trust, understanding their emotional needs, and integrating meaningful engagement activities to promote connection and overall wellbeing."*

This kind of care doesn't happen by accident — it requires time. And that's where Blossom's model makes a real difference.

In a sector often driven by speed and efficiency, Blossom Home Care takes a different approach. Visits are a minimum of 50 minutes, giving carers the space to build relationships and deliver truly person-centred support.

For Olumide, that time is essential. It allows him to move beyond a checklist of tasks and instead focus on the whole person — their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. It's what makes moments like singing together possible, and what allows trust to grow.

These longer visits create the conditions for deeper connections, enabling carers to understand each individual's preferences, personality and needs. It's a model that recognises something often overlooked in care: that meaningful relationships are at the heart of wellbeing.

Families see the difference too. Knowing their loved one is not only safe but genuinely cared for — and even experiencing moments of joy — brings reassurance that goes beyond standard care provision.

Beyond his uplifting presence, Olumide remains deeply professional and attentive. He listens carefully, adapts his approach, promotes independence and always ensures dignity and comfort. His commitment never wavers, even on the most challenging days.

But it's the way he combines these qualities with warmth and creativity that makes his care truly stand out.

In a sector under pressure, where time is often limited and tasks can take priority, Olumide's approach is a reminder of what care can and should be. It's not just about what is done, but how it is done — and how it makes people feel. His work shows that small, human moments can have a lasting impact. A familiar song. A shared laugh. A moment of connection. These are the things that transform care from routine into something meaningful.

As Olumide puts it, *"By blending empathy, consistency and person-centred support, I've been able to make a positive impact and contribute to a more supportive environment for both the client and their family."*

In the end, his story is about more than one carer — it's about the power of time, connection and creativity in care.

Because sometimes, the most meaningful support doesn't come from words at all.

Sometimes, it starts with a song.

 [blossomhomecare.co.uk](https://www.blossomhomecare.co.uk)



***Music helps
build trust, lift
mood and create
moments that truly
matter in care.***



What Keeps Me Awake at Night

Flourish

Eammon Price

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
FLOURISH

Eammon Price, Chief Executive at Flourish, a digital learning and wellbeing platform supporting the social care workforce, reflects on the growing pressures facing care and education professionals — and why technology and innovation must be part of the solution.



We've spent too much time talking about solutions without implementing them.



You only have to watch the news for 10 minutes to see that the care and education sectors are under severe strain. Social care is overwhelmed, schools are struggling to retain staff, and children's services and fostering services are critically under-resourced. What keeps me awake at night is the scale of the challenge we face — and how quickly it is growing.

Over the next decade, the burden on younger generations will be immense. An ageing population will need more care just as there are fewer working-age people to provide it. Meanwhile, low pay, stress, burnout and poor conditions drive people out faster than they can be replaced. Without intervention, we'll have exhausted workers, neglected children, unsupported families and a generation stretched beyond its limits.

My perspective on these challenges is shaped deeply by my own background. Raised in Liverpool, my mum worked in social care and became a foster carer; my nan ran a care home and my other nan adopted two adult residents with Down Syndrome, raising them after having her own eight children. Growing up surrounded by people who dedicated their lives to caring for others leaves a lasting impression.

I have grown up seeing the pressures on social workers first-hand. The extraordinary commitment to care shown every day by those in the care sector in incredibly difficult circumstances shouldn't be taken for granted. At some point in our lives, we will all depend on these services. From a societal perspective, we all have a part to play, no matter how big or how small.

Flourish, part of The Progress Group, is a small business of 35, but we support nearly 200,000 people across our services. We are uniquely positioned to drive meaningful change, which gives us the opportunity to set higher standards, innovate responsibly and create positive ripple effects throughout the sector:

Raised around people making a difference in care, and now as the CEO of Flourish, I am taking my responsibility seriously to ensure that Flourish's impact is both substantial and lasting, shaping a future where the sectors we reach are stronger, more resilient and better aligned with the needs of society.

One of the biggest risks facing the workforce is the vicious cycle many services now find themselves in. Staff shortages lead to rising workloads, which increases stress and harms wellbeing, which then pushes more people out of the sector. Those who remain often lack the time for training and development, resulting in a less skilled workforce.

This was very much in our minds when we launched the 'Flourish Wellbeing' app. The app offers personalised wellbeing support, helping workers in these sectors build resilience with tailored tools and resources to help address the issues they have identified. By better equipping workers to manage their wellbeing, the app helps to break the cycle which often leads to people leaving the sector due to stress and burnout.

For me, technology represents one of the biggest opportunities for change. Flourish Wellbeing is allowing us break this cycle using technology. More broadly, I believe AI and digital tools can help sectors meet growing demand while keeping care human-centred. Technology can boost productivity and expand capacity — an area we are constantly looking to develop further at Flourish.

In sectors where individuals simply don't have enough time, the ability to impart knowledge and wellbeing support efficiently can increase productivity and ultimately help deliver higher-quality services. Technology has a particularly important role to play in the e-learning and wellbeing space. Platforms like Flourish Wellbeing now create tailored journeys that were previously too complicated and resource intensive before AI advancements.

There is also a real opportunity to rethink how staffing works. In the sectors we operate in — especially social care — we can grow the overall number of carers by allowing them to easily schedule their own shifts around existing commitments.

Click Shifts was created with this intention. The platform connects clients to local, vetted carers at short notice without the need for a traditional agency, enabling financial benefits for both the carer and the provider. It helps increase capacity across the sector, makes better use of existing skills and ultimately delivers better outcomes for individuals.

However, technology alone will not solve the structural challenges facing these sectors. Nationally, we must also rethink how we value the people who work in care and education. Teaching is fundamental to shaping future generations, yet the profession no longer carries the appeal it once did when it comes to attracting the strongest talent.

In care, many people are drawn into the sector through personal experience rather than pay. The sector relies heavily on that compassion, often expecting commitment without sufficient support or fair compensation. We need to reframe the national conversation around these sectors so that the pay, development opportunities and conditions reflect the crucial role these workers play in our society.

The reality is that the sectors are in crisis, and we have been saying this repeatedly over the years. Yet despite repeated warnings, consultations, white papers and policy interventions — from one government to the next — meaningful change remains slow.

We have spent too much time talking about solutions without implementing them. What is needed now is consistent action to build a sustainable, well-supported system that can meet the growing needs of society. The crisis is not going away on its own, and neither should our commitment to solving it.

Despite these challenges, I remain hopeful about the future. If it was not for the technological advancements we have seen in the past few years, I would be genuinely concerned about the future of social care and education.

But these innovations give me hope that we can build sectors that remain human-centred while becoming far more productive and efficient through the smart use of technology. Technology will never replace the human element, but it can help us work smarter — allowing people to focus on what truly matters in the care and education sectors: caring for others and supporting learners.

 flourish.co.uk

“

*Without
intervention, we'll
have exhausted
workers, neglected
children and
unsupported
families.*

”



The TOUGH Question...

Is Sustainability Becoming Another Pressure Placed on an Already Stretched Care Workforce?



Ryan Brummit

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SUPPORT
ADVANCE

Ryan Brummitt, Executive Director of Support at Advance, a provider of specialist supported housing, reflects on how environmental ambitions can be delivered in ways that support – rather than strain – care services.



The real risk isn't sustainability itself, but responsibility drifting downward without leadership, investment and systems.



In its 2026 outlook for the UK health and social care sector, NatWest highlights growing pressures on the horizon as demand rises alongside regulatory scrutiny and technological change. When these factors sit alongside existing economic, financial and workforce challenges, it is easy to see why sustainability goals can sometimes feel like just another compliance demand placed on already stretched services.

Green sustainability is rapidly climbing higher on organisational agendas, with increasing expectations around carbon reduction, energy efficiency, waste management and sustainable procurement. Within supported housing and care services this can translate into new reporting requirements, property upgrades and changes to everyday practice. For frontline colleagues already supporting people with complex needs, these additional expectations can feel like one more demand layered onto already busy roles.

The real risk, however, is not the green agenda itself. The greater risk lies in allowing responsibility for sustainability to drift downward without the systems, training, investment and leadership ownership needed to support it. Environmental sustainability must begin at strategic level. Decisions about asset investment, heating systems, insulation, energy contracts and fleet management are leadership decisions and should never become informal tasks absorbed by support workers without clarity or resources.

It is also important to recognise that sustainability in care extends beyond environmental targets alone. A service that is financially unstable, digitally fragmented or constantly firefighting workforce shortages cannot realistically claim to be sustainable. True sustainability connects environmental responsibility with operational resilience and organisational stability.

Technology has an important role to play in achieving this balance. As the NatWest 2026 outlook notes, *“Technology is no longer a ‘nice to have.’”* Barrie Davison, Head of Public Sector at NatWest, captures the shift clearly: *“Digital transformation isn't about gadgets; it's about building smarter, safer and more sustainable care models.”*

When used well, digital systems help deliver sustainability without adding pressure. Tech-enabled services can reduce paper use, streamline documentation, support remote auditing and improve data transparency. Management information becomes clearer and more timely, enabling leaders to track energy performance, compliance trends and resource use more effectively. Customer information can be accessed in real time, reducing duplication and unnecessary administrative effort.

When digital infrastructure works properly, it also gives time back to frontline teams. That reclaimed time can be reinvested in meaningful, person-centred support. Sustainable care should not be about adding new green tasks to daily routines; it should be about designing systems that reduce waste, improve efficiency and enable better decisions.

In disability and mental health services, sustainable care in practice may involve energy-efficient buildings, thoughtful procurement and reduced environmental impact. But it must also include protecting workforce wellbeing and service quality. Pursuing environmental targets without recognising operational realities risks undermining the very services sustainability is meant to protect for the future.

Leadership visibility is therefore critical. Senior leaders must remain accountable for balancing environmental ambition with the practical realities of service delivery. Governance structures should absorb complexity rather than create it, and environmental performance should be monitored alongside quality and financial indicators rather than treated as an additional layer of compliance.

Looking ahead, sustainable care requires three key foundations: investment in greener infrastructure, digital systems that reduce duplication and waste, and leadership approaches that shield frontline teams from unnecessary burden while enabling them to contribute meaningfully.

Environmental sustainability is essential for the long-term future of care services. But it must strengthen organisations rather than stretch them. When embedded through strategy, infrastructure and thoughtful system design, sustainability becomes part of delivering resilient, high-quality and genuinely person-centred support.



*Environmental targets pursued
without regard to operational pressure risk
undermining the services they aim
to protect.*



Ask the Experts

What Small, Low-Cost Changes Have the Biggest Long-Term Impact on Sustainability?

Sustainability in care can often feel like a big, complex challenge — but what if the most meaningful changes are also the simplest? We asked a range of sector leaders: *“What’s one small, low-cost change care providers can make today that delivers the biggest long-term impact?”*



Sophie Bradley
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FOUNDER
SPIKE'S SIGHT WORDS

“ Literacy through play builds connection, resilience and a child’s long-term wellbeing. ”

If you want one small, low-cost change that actually changes a child’s future, it’s this: prioritise physical, tactile play over digital passivity. We often talk about sustainability in terms of resources, but the most sustainable thing we can do is build a foundation of literacy and human connection through active engagement.

By using physical tools — like the educational board games we develop at Spike’s Sight Words — parents and care providers can turn a ‘learning task’ into a moment of genuine connection. It doesn’t require an expensive tech budget, yet the impact is massive. Unlike an app that just ‘babysits’, a physical game requires eye contact, turn-taking and real conversation.

This ‘Literacy through Play’ habit builds the cognitive and emotional resilience children need to thrive independently later in life. When we lead with these small, daily interactions, we aren’t just teaching words — we are sustaining a child’s long-term wellbeing and strengthening the bond that supports them for years to come.



Lucy Corner
DIRECTOR
CORNERSTONE CARE SOLUTIONS LTD

“ Sustainability is built through small, repeated conversations that prevent drift. ”

One small, low-cost change with the greatest long-term impact on sustainability is introducing a simple weekly reflective governance huddle. Too often, sustainability is treated as a financial problem alone. In reality, services fail slowly through small, repeated blind spots — incidents not properly analysed, staff burnout going unnoticed, minor agency overspend becoming normalised, and themes in complaints not being joined up.

A regular leadership huddle reviewing three things — risk, workforce wellbeing and cash flow indicators — creates discipline and visibility. It does not require new software or external consultants, just honesty, consistency and curiosity.

When providers encourage a culture of early identification rather than crisis response, they protect margins, improve retention and strengthen regulatory confidence. Sustainability is not built through grand strategies; it is built through small, repeated conversations that prevent drift. The services that survive long term are those that notice early and act early.



Michele Jogee
DIRECTOR
HP HOMECARE

“Better care notes strengthen daily systems and improve outcomes without extra cost.”

One powerful sustainability change in care costs almost nothing: better care notes. Daily documentation sits at the heart of safe, consistent care, yet in many services it is rushed, inconsistent or difficult for colleagues to interpret. When notes are unclear, staff spend time chasing information or piecing together what happened during previous shifts.

Introducing digital notes can make an immediate difference. In our own service we introduced a digital system, NurseNotes.io, which allows managers to quickly review and respond to care notes across all clients — something that simply wasn't possible when records were handwritten and left in individual homes. When carers record observations consistently, patterns become easier to spot and important details are less likely to be missed.

This is particularly important in dementia care, where small changes can signal that someone needs additional support. Sustainability in care isn't always about large investments — often it's about strengthening the small daily systems that support carers to do their jobs well.



Charis Nelson
OPERATIONS MANAGER
MASH CARE

“Sustainable care starts with stable teams, not just filling vacancies.”

One small but powerful change care providers can make today is shifting focus from simply filling vacancies to truly strengthening workforce stability. Sustainable care services are built on consistent, supported teams, yet retention is often treated as secondary to recruitment.

Simple, low-cost actions can make a lasting difference. Improving candidate experience, prioritising values-based recruitment, and offering structured support beyond initial induction — such as regular check-ins or a buddy system — can help new starters build confidence rather than feel overwhelmed. When carers feel supported and connected, they're far more likely to stay.

From our experience at Mash Care, providers who invest in communication and long-term workforce relationships reduce reliance on agency staffing and build more resilient services. Sustainability in care ultimately comes down to people, and even small, thoughtful investments in staff support can create lasting stability for teams and those they care for.



Claire O'Brien
OPERATIONS MANAGER
MARAMA CARE

“Shared transport cuts emissions while strengthening connection across the workforce.”

One of our most impactful initiatives is our approach to sustainable staff transport. To help reduce the number of individual car journeys each day, we promote car sharing across the business, making it easier for colleagues to travel together to and from work. Fewer cars on the road means lower emissions, reduced congestion, and a stronger sense of community among staff.

In addition, we've introduced a dedicated driver service that collects employees and takes them directly to their shifts. This supports team members who may face transport challenges while significantly cutting down on unnecessary private vehicle use.

By centralising staff transport, we're reducing fuel consumption and lowering our collective carbon footprint. It's a simple, practical change that benefits both the environment and our workforce, showing how small operational shifts can make a meaningful contribution to long-term sustainability.

Have *Your* Say!



Motunrayo Obajimi
SUPPORT WORKER AND
PROACT-SCIPR-UK INSTRUCTOR
LDC CARE COMPANY

3 Wishes

If I had a magic wand, I wouldn't just tweak the social care sector; I would reimagine it.

1. As a support worker and a Proact Scipr instructor, my first wish would be for social care to be treated as an essential infrastructure, just like the NHS or education. Care is not an "extra": it is what allows families to work, communities to function, and individuals to live with dignity. I would wish for long-term, protected funding that recognises social care as the backbone of society, not an afterthought.
2. My second wish would be to professionalise and elevate the care workforce. Support work requires clinical awareness, emotional intelligence, resilience, and specialist training, especially in areas like positive behaviour support. Yet too often, it is labelled "low skilled." I would wish for nationally recognised career pathways, competitive salaries, and leadership opportunities that reflect the true expertise within our workforce.
3. My third wish would be to shift the narrative from "care" to "possibility." Instead of asking, "What support does this person need?" we would ask, "What kind of life does this person want?" Social care would be built around ambition, inclusion, and empowerment, enabling people not just to be safe, but to flourish.

When social care thrives, society thrives. And that is not magic; that is vision.

In The Spotlight

Rotherham veteran celebrates 104th birthday.

Meg Sewell has celebrated the remarkable milestone of her 104th birthday surrounded by family, friends and carers at Moorgate Croft care home in Rotherham.

Meg, who moved to the home in October 2025, has led a life marked by public service, community involvement and professional achievement. Born in Greasborough, she became a well-known local journalist, writing the women's page for the Rotherham Advertiser for many years. Her engaging writing and community presence made her a familiar and popular figure, often invited to open events and judge competitions.

During World War II, Meg served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), reaching the rank of Sergeant while stationed in Nottingham for four years. She also supported wartime postal services, helping maintain vital communication between families.

Her dedication to community life continued long after the war. In 2015, she was awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth II for her services to the Women's Institute and numerous charities.

Meg was married to her late husband Harold and is a proud mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to six.

Home manager Lauren Davies said residents and staff were delighted to celebrate Meg's milestone, describing her as "a real character" who is much loved within the Moorgate Croft community.



Meg Sewell
MOORGATE CROFT

Movers & Shakers

Experienced clinical lead promoted to registered manager at Merlin House in Crewe.

Sarah Whiston has been appointed service manager at Merlin House in Crewe, part of the ECHO group of services.

Merlin House is a specialist care home with nursing that supports people with learning disabilities and complex needs. Sarah joined the service in April 2025 as clinical lead nurse and has now been promoted to service manager, recognising her leadership, clinical expertise and commitment to person-centred care.

Sarah qualified as a Learning Disabilities Nurse in 2010 after completing her training at Keele University. Since then, she has built extensive experience across a variety of health and social care settings, including secure hospitals, elderly dementia care and clinical triage nursing.

Her career has included both frontline and management roles, giving her a broad skillset and the ability to work effectively in demanding and complex environments. In her new role, Sarah will lead the Merlin House team in delivering safe, compassionate care while continuing to develop the service to improve outcomes and quality of life for residents.

Sarah said she is “incredibly proud” to take on the role, adding that she is passionate about supporting residents to live fulfilling lives and helping staff thrive.

ECHO Group Managing Director Andrew Shelton-Murray said Sarah’s promotion is “thoroughly deserved” and praised her strong leadership and dedication to high-quality care.



Sarah Whiston
SERVICE MANAGER
MERLIN HOUSE
PART OF THE ECHO
GROUP OF SERVICES

Lightbulb Moment

My lightbulb moment is... sometimes the biggest changes come from the simplest discoveries.

A lady in her 90s joined us from a care home where she’d been living for the past three years. From the moment she arrived, it was clear she struggled to hear. Her hearing was extremely poor and staff often had to raise their voices just to communicate with her.

Over time, it had simply been accepted as age-related hearing loss. We tried hearing aids, hoping they might help, but they made little difference. The impact on her daily life was huge. Conversations were difficult, social activities felt isolating, and joining in with friends became almost impossible. If you can’t hear what people are saying, how do you take part?

Still, something didn’t quite sit right with us, so we arranged a full hearing assessment to see if there might be another solution. That’s when the real light bulb moment happened. During the check, the specialist quickly discovered the cause: her ears were completely blocked with wax — a simple issue that had gone unnoticed for years.

We supported her to use olive oil drops for a week and then arranged for an ear care specialist to safely remove the wax. The result was incredible. Her hearing returned to normal and the first thing she said to us was, “It’s nice to see you hear.” Now she’s happily chatting, laughing and enjoying social time again — proof that sometimes one last try can make all the difference.



Caroline Martin
MANAGER
ST MARTIN’S
A CARE DORSET EXTRA HOME



Now Have Your Say!

Do you have any thoughts you’d care to share? CareTalk want to hear from you!
Email chloe.markey@care-awards.co.uk for the opportunity to appear in upcoming editions.

Coming Up...

CareTalk has a packed agenda of events ahead. We are proud to be media partners and supporters for some fantastic events listed below.

Housing with Care Awards 2026

5th June 2026 Hilton Bankside London

Northern Ireland

Learning Disability & Autism Awards 2026

10th June 2026 Hilton, Belfast

National Learning Disability & Autism Awards 2026

19th June 2026 ICC, Birmingham

The Dementia Care Awards 2026

24th June 2026 Hilton Bankside London

The Palliative Care Awards 2026

2nd July 2026 Hilton Bankside London

The Children & Young People Awards 2026

22nd October 2026 ICC, Birmingham

Social Care Top 30 Awards 2026

October 2026 Marriott Grosvenor Square, London

The Neurological & Complex Awards 2026

27th October 2026 Hilton Bankside London

Great British Care Awards Regionals 2026

30th October 2026 East of England – Milton Keynes Dons F.C.

6th November 2026 Yorkshire & Humberside – Royal Armouries, Leeds

7th November 2026 West Midlands – ICC, Birmingham

11th November 2026 Wales – Holland House Hotel, Cardiff

14th November 2026 North West – Kimpton, Manchester

16th November 2026 Scotland – Voco Grand Central Glasgow by IHG

19th November 2026 South West – Ashton Gate, Bristol

20th November 2026 South East – Double Tree, Brighton

21st November 2026 London – Hilton, Bankside

23rd November 2026 East Midlands – EMCC, Nottingham

26th November 2026 North East – Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park, Newcastle

Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care (WAGS) Awards 2026

December 2026 Hilton Bankside London

*please note: some dates/venues subject to change.

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Angela Rippon CBE

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- ★ THE OUTREACH AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA TRAINER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AWARD ★
- ★ THE INNOVATIVE SPACES WITHIN RESIDENTIAL CARE: DESIGN AWARD ★
- ★ THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA'S UNSUNG HERO AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY BUSINESS AWARD ★
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- ★ THE LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA: CO-PRODUCTION AND PARTNERSHIP AWARD ★
- ★ THE CREATING SPACES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: DEVELOPER AWARD ★
- ★ THE INSPIRATIONAL PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AWARD ★
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- ★ THE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO DEMENTIA AWARD ★

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Leading the Way in Social Care

Care Starts with Belonging



Lisa Coates-Peers
SENIOR PSYCHOLOGICAL
WELLBEING PRACTITIONER
MAKING SPACE



Lisa Coates-Peers is a Senior Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner at national social care charity Making Space. Here, Lisa explains how creating a sense of belonging in everyday practice can shape whether people engage with support or feel left behind.



**We are working
with people, not
processes.**



In psychological wellbeing and social care, leadership is not defined by job titles or hierarchy. It is defined by impact. For me, leading the way means creating services where people feel they belong. Sometimes the difference between someone engaging with support and quietly withdrawing is whether they feel they belong. It shows up in everyday practice: the language we use, the assumptions we avoid, the flexibility we offer, and whether someone leaves an interaction feeling respected and understood, even when their life does not fit a standard pathway.

My approach to leadership has been shaped strongly by lived experience. I have seen first-hand how easily systems exclude people by expecting them to adapt to services, rather than designing services around real lives. Many people who access psychological and social care are already managing pain, fatigue, cognitive overload, caring responsibilities, stigma or the impact of previous negative experiences. When services assume capacity, people who are already struggling are often the most likely to disengage.

As a practitioner, I work from a place of curiosity, transparency and compassion, and I aim to design processes that assume complexity rather than treating it as an exception. That commitment to belonging extends beyond my clinical work. I have also published a children's book centred on inclusion and belonging, reflecting my belief that the language we use and the understanding we model early in life can have a lifelong impact.

In my role as Making Space's LGBTQ+ Champion, I have seen how small, consistent changes can make a significant difference. The biggest impact has come from pairing affirming language with affirming action. This includes routinely asking and recording names and pronouns, removing heteronormative assumptions from templates, supporting staff to respond confidently to disclosures, and embedding inclusion into everyday practice rather than treating it as an add-on.

Campaigning for pronouns in staff email signatures and the use of visible inclusion tools has helped signal safety and belonging from the outset. When inclusion is consistent and visible, people no longer have to assess whether it is safe to be themselves.

Accessibility has also been central to my work, particularly for neurodivergent people and those living with long-term health conditions. Traditional service models often rely on people processing large amounts of information, retaining details between sessions and engaging in specific ways. To reduce pressure, I developed two practical tools. The first, *Today I Need Space (TINS)*, offers a structured way for people to communicate what feels manageable in the moment without having to explain everything verbally. The second is a long-term health conditions screening tool that captures how symptoms such as pain, fatigue and cognitive difficulties affect engagement, pacing and memory. Together, these tools help practitioners understand the person more quickly and agree reasonable adjustments early.

Personalisation only becomes meaningful when it changes decisions. Shared formulation, meaningful choice around goals and pace, and outcomes that matter to the individual are essential. An intersectional lens is vital, because people experience services differently depending on the combined impact of identity, socioeconomic position, caring responsibilities and previous experiences of services. Equity requires us to notice these differences and adapt accordingly.

Challenges remain. Time pressure, digital exclusion and rigid pathways can unintentionally advantage those who find services easiest to access while creating barriers for others. Workforce wellbeing and inclusion are inseparable from safe, compassionate care. Services rely on supported, supervised, and psychologically safe staff to learn, reflect, and improve practice.

What gives me hope is seeing how practice can shift when services listen, act on feedback and design with lived experience rather than around it. Influence spreads when ways of working improve outcomes and feel more human – we are working with people, not processes. When we centre belonging, we move closer to care that truly puts people first.

“

Sometimes the difference between engaging with support and withdrawing is whether someone feels they belong.

”



Skills for Sustainable Care Catering



Neel Radia
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CARE CATERING

Neel Radia, National Chairman of the National Association of Care Catering, shares how training, collaboration and practical tools are helping care caterers embed sustainable food practices.



Sustainability works best when communities grow, share and source food together.



The National Association of Care Catering (NACC) is supporting care caterers across the sector to embed sustainable food practices that are practical, measurable and resident-centred through education, collaboration and sector leadership.

Training and workforce development play a pivotal role in ensuring staff at every level have the skills, knowledge and confidence to implement sustainability consistently. Workshops and live demonstrations at our annual Training & Development Forum cover topics such as sustainable menu development, energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction strategies, responsible procurement and embedding eco-friendly practices in line with Care Quality Commission expectations. Regional seminars have also included hands-on growing workshops delivered by Pot Gang in the Midlands, plant-based menu development sessions in the North and sustainable fishing education across multiple regions.

Our webinar programme provides accessible, practical guidance on sustainable food practices without requiring caterers to leave their workplace. These sessions are shaped by member feedback and focus on solving real-world challenges. They help teams improve environmental performance while maintaining high standards of nutrition and care, building confidence in offering greener, nutritionally balanced alternatives and demonstrating how sustainable menu design can support both resident wellbeing and environmental goals while remaining cost effective.

Gardening and growing initiatives are becoming an important part of sustainable food culture while actively involving residents in menu development. Raised beds, small vegetable plots and indoor herb stations allow residents to participate in planting, watering and harvesting, with the produce grown then being used in the kitchen. Collaborations with local allotments, schools, volunteers, community gardens and food education groups create opportunities for local sourcing, intergenerational gardening and cultural food exchanges, reinforcing the idea that sustainability is a shared community responsibility.

A growing range of digital tools, systems and kitchen technologies are proving highly effective in monitoring and reducing environmental impact in care catering. Innovations such as digital ordering platforms and kitchen management software help predict ingredient needs, reduce over-ordering and cut leftovers by up to 30%. Many modern catering platforms now include sustainability metrics, such as carbon footprint tracking for individual recipes and ingredients, enabling chefs to design menus aligned with low-carbon principles and encouraging the use of seasonal produce and more plant-forward dishes.


Even where ageing infrastructure and equipment limit sustainability improvements, digital tools and operational changes can still deliver immediate benefits. Optimising kitchen workflow within restricted spaces, enhancing storage systems to prevent spoilage and wastage, improving team routines to reduce unnecessary energy usage, joining used-oil recycling schemes and employing low-energy tabletop equipment in compact spaces can help care homes make meaningful sustainability progress despite physical limitations.

The NACC has learned several important lessons from members who are leading the way in sustainable care catering, and these insights offer practical guidance for the wider sector:

- **Meaningful sustainability is built through consistent, small decisions rather than one-off initiatives.** Care homes that excel embed environmental considerations into daily service, including smarter menu planning, creative ingredient use, strong communication and continuous team engagement.
- **Members who have made the greatest progress often approach challenges with flexibility.** They use digital tools to optimise menus in real time, experiment with greener dishes and cultivate strong supplier relationships.
- **Sustainability is most successful when it becomes a shared goal across the home.** Catering teams, managers, residents, families, suppliers and external organisations all contribute to progress.

Above all, the NACC has learned that sustainability is a journey best travelled collectively. By sharing ideas, celebrating innovation and remaining open to new approaches, the sector not only improves care catering but also contributes to a greener, healthier future for residents and the wider community.

 thenacc.co.uk



“
Training gives care teams the skills and confidence to embed sustainability.
”

The NACC welcomes members from large national care groups to independent operators, and across residential care settings, nursing homes, day centres and meals-on-wheels services. It is a member of WRAP and active supporter of Guardians of Grub, Vegetarian for Life and Love British Food.

Building a Sustainability-Minded Workforce



Claire Callaghan
DIRECTOR
THE KNOLL CARE PARTNERSHIP
AND LUMINA LEADERSHIP

Claire Callaghan explains how drawing on Skills for Care resources, embedding sustainability into culture, leadership and everyday behaviours can strengthen care and build more resilient organisations.



When you think about sustainability in adult social care, what comes to mind? Extra cost, another policy, or something teams won't prioritise? In a sector already under pressure, it's easy to see sustainability as an added burden — separate from the real work of care.

But what if sustainability isn't an "extra" at all? What if it's about how we lead, how our teams think, and the everyday behaviours that shape quality care?

Within the Care Quality Commission's Well-Led framework, providers are asked not only to understand their environmental impact, but to actively reduce it and support others to do the same. This is not just about compliance — it's about culture. Done well, sustainability strengthens person-centred care, supports staff wellbeing, and builds more resilient services.

The challenge is not knowing *what* to do. It's embedding it into how we work every day.

To really embed sustainability, we need to understand its three core components:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** energy use, reducing waste, emissions, resource consumption.
- **Economic Sustainability:** creating financial resilience, reducing wasteful cost, improving efficiency.
- **Social Sustainability:** supporting the workforce, strengthening community links and enhancing wellbeing.

Sustainability in social care needs all three; if one component is weak, the others will struggle.

One of the biggest challenges is helping teams see sustainability not as a "green initiative" but as good practice. Leaders can make this easier by connecting sustainability to things staff already care about: comfort for residents, smoother workflows, a less stressful environment, and a sense of pride in the home.

This means weaving sustainability into daily routines rather than launching grand campaigns. Small, familiar actions can make the biggest difference:

- **Turning off equipment and lights when not in use.**
- **Reducing food waste through better menu planning and accurate portioning.**
- **Choosing longer-lasting, repairable products instead of disposable ones.**
- **Planning travel and rota arrangements to avoid unnecessary journeys.**
- **Using digital systems to reduce printing and paper waste.**

These micro-habits don't feel like extra work, they feel like working more thoughtfully.

Policies alone don't change behaviour; culture does. For sustainability to take root, teams need to feel that it's part of who the organisation is, not a one off project.

Leaders play a crucial role by modelling simple behaviours: mindful purchasing, reducing waste, using digital tools, or checking whether something can be repurposed before replacing it. When staff see these habits consistently, they become the norm rather than the exception.

Crucially, many sustainable ideas come from frontline workers. They're the ones who notice which bins are always overflowing, which equipment rarely gets used, or when lights are left on. Involving them in problem-solving empowers the workforce and helps create a culture where sustainability feels like shared ownership - not a top down expectation.



It's about removing waste, frustration, and inefficiency so everyone can focus on care.



A sustainable culture is not about doing more with less; it's about removing waste, frustration, and inefficiency so everyone can focus more on care.

Embedding sustainability into workforce development ensures it becomes part of everyday thinking. Practical training can include:

- Understanding environmental impact and simple daily actions that reduce it.
- Reducing waste linked to stock management, PPE, or food.
- Encouraging staff to think critically about travel, deliveries, and shift patterns.
- Using supervision or team meetings to reflect on small improvements.

Skills for Care has been helpful in framing this within leadership and culture development. Their Well Led resources and guidance support organisations to build reflective, forward-looking teams who see sustainability as part of delivering excellent, person centred care.

Sustainable practice doesn't need to cost more. In fact, many changes save money:

- Switching to LED lighting or installing simple timers.
- Minimising single-use items where safe and appropriate.
- Reviewing procurement to prioritise durable goods and reduce delivery frequency.
- Growing herbs, vegetables, or flowers with residents to support wellbeing and biodiversity.
- Reducing printing by defaulting to digital tools.
- Recycling old tech responsibly and refurbishing items where possible.

These changes may seem small, but when adopted consistently, they create meaningful impact.

Some worry sustainability will complicate care, but in practice it often enhances it. Warmer, better-insulated spaces are more comfortable. A less cluttered environment improves dignity and safety. Nature-based activities bring purpose and joy. Community partnerships reduce isolation. Even food waste reduction can boost nutrition by ensuring menus reflect residents' real preferences.

Sustainability, at its heart, is about creating environments where people feel safe, valued, and connected.

Care organisations don't need sophisticated tools to evidence sustainability. Simple measures can include:

- Energy usage before and after small changes.
- Amount of waste or recycling collected.
- Cost savings from changes in procurement.
- Staff suggestions implemented.
- Resident wellbeing outcomes linked to sustainable activities.

These measures show progress not only environmentally but socially, strengthening the narrative of a well led, reflective service.

Sustainability in adult social care is not an optional extra or a standalone initiative. It's a reflection of how we lead, how we work, and the values we bring to everyday practice. When it becomes part of team culture – not just policy – it stops feeling like another task and starts shaping better care.

By focusing on small, consistent actions and empowering staff to take ownership, organisations can reduce waste, improve efficiency and create environments where people feel valued, comfortable and connected.



Skills for Care's Well-Led resources help organisations build reflective teams embedding sustainability.



Ultimately, building a sustainability-minded workforce isn't about doing more. It's about thinking differently – removing what doesn't add value, and creating the conditions for people and services to thrive.

luminaleadership.co.uk
skillsforcare.org.uk



Further reading

Skills for Care –
Well-Led Programme guidance
Available at skillsforcare.org.uk

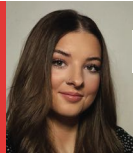


The Legal Bit

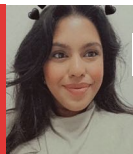
What the Casey Commission Means for Social Care's Workforce



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Asif Hanif, Georgia Marshall, and Inderjit Kaur from global immigration advisers Fragomen LLP explore how the Casey Commission could reshape workforce models, immigration policy and international recruitment in adult social care.



These changes will have a significant impact on employers who rely on international recruitment.



The establishment of the independent adult social care commission, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, marks a pivotal moment in the UK's ambition to transform adult social care. The commission has been tasked with developing long term recommendations to rebuild and modernise the sector; build cross party consensus and lay the foundations for a fairer, more sustainable system. As its work progresses, its findings are expected to shape not only the future structure of social care but also the workforce models that will support it.

For employers who rely on international recruitment and for the immigration frameworks that underpin that workforce, these changes will have a significant impact. Emerging models of care are already redefining the skills and responsibilities expected within the adult social care workforce. This evolution will directly influence which roles qualify for sponsorship. The commission's priorities – reviewing local authority and NHS funding, strengthening workforce development and career pathways and shifting more care into people's homes to reduce avoidable hospital admissions – will reshape how frontline roles are designed.

This reinforces the need for immigration policy to keep pace with a sector moving towards higher-skilled, better-defined and more technologically enabled roles. International recruitment will remain vital but must complement a growing, increasingly professionalised domestic workforce. As the Casey Commission pushes for a more integrated model of adult social care, the design of frontline roles is likely to evolve in ways that affect both immigration eligibility and sponsorship strategy. Ensuring alignment between workforce changes and immigration rules will be essential for employers who need continued access to global talent.

The widening of responsibilities for care roles will significantly impact employers' obligations and increase the compliance burden for organisations that sponsor migrant workers. Employers will need to scrutinise job design, role expectations and eligibility criteria more closely than ever.

Adding clinical tasks to care roles raises important questions about job purpose and qualification requirements. Introducing responsibilities, such as blood pressure monitoring or medication administration, shifts the role closer to nursing duties and blurs the boundaries between them. This change requires stronger managerial oversight as tasks traditionally performed by registered professionals begin to be delegated to nonclinical staff.

This lack of distinction between care worker and nursing responsibilities can lead to noncompliance, especially when the wrong Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code is selected. Accurate, up to date job descriptions are therefore essential. They determine the SOC code, the associated immigration route, and the employment obligations that follow.

At the same time, ongoing scrutiny of pay and working conditions within social care may become one of the biggest challenges for employers adapting their workforce and training models. While the overall skill threshold is unlikely to rise without formal qualifications, the expansion of responsibilities may ultimately influence role eligibility for certain visa holders.

As the sector moves through one of the most significant periods of reform in decades, employers will need clear guidance to stay compliant, agile, and competitive. By consulting with immigration professionals, social care providers can:

- review and redesign job descriptions to ensure the correct SOC codes and sponsorship routes
- anticipate how evolving care models will affect immigration eligibility
- manage compliance risks as clinical tasks shift into non clinical roles
- plan for future workforce needs as the Commission's recommendations take shape
- adapt recruitment strategies so international talent continues to complement the domestic workforce

By engaging immigration support, organisations can align workforce planning with regulatory requirements, future-proof their workforce models and continue delivering high-quality care as the sector evolves.

This Month we Meet:

Nexus Planning



NEXUS
PLANNING

Sarah Roe
DIRECTOR
NEXUS PLANNING

How does Nexus collaborate with care operators, housing associations, and local authorities on projects?

Nexus Planning adopts a collaborative approach to working with all our clients, including care operators and housing associations, throughout the lifecycle of projects. This involves working closely with clients to understand the nature of their developments so we are able to explain and present proposals to local authorities in the best possible way. We also guide clients successfully through the pre-application, application and/or appeals process, providing them with advice on planning strategy, as well as promoting sites through the Local Plan process.

We also pride ourselves on maintaining good relationships with local authorities in order to help smooth the planning process for our clients. Our in-house Analytics and Research team also supports authorities by helping prepare housing for older people Needs Assessments to form part of Local Plan evidence bases, in turn helping inform local planning policies relating to this type of accommodation.

What needs or gaps in current provision are you seeing that local plans should be responding to?

In view of the ageing population, it is my view that there shouldn't be any policy requirement to demonstrate a need for this form of development. However, many local policies require this even though the authority concerned may not have an up-to-date assessment of need themselves, which puts the onus on developers to demonstrate this as part of planning applications and is an unnecessary barrier to delivery.

Few Local Plans also contain site allocations for housing for older people, meaning there is no long-term planning for their housing needs and certainty of delivery. That said, I'm pleased to see the new draft NPPF place greater emphasis on

Each month we meet key stakeholders and business leaders in the social care sector. This month we speak to Sarah Roe, Director at Nexus Planning, a leading consultancy focused on planning, policy and research for later living and care developments.

meeting the housing needs of older people and encourage Local Plans to include site allocations.

How does Nexus engage with housing and planning policy at the national or local level for this sector?

Nexus Planning publishes insights and critiques on national and local planning policy relating to older people, which I like to think has positively influenced the planning system.

We also regularly prepare representations to policy consultations at both national and local level and can attend Local Plan Examinations on behalf of clients, which similarly has helped shape local planning policies.

Our in-house Analytics and Research team also prepares detailed Needs Assessments as part of Local Plan evidence bases, which details the scale of need for each form of accommodation within the sector, again helping shape policies related to housing for older people in emerging Local Plans.

What lessons have you learned about social inclusion and wellbeing in senior living communities?

The most important lesson I've learned is how important social inclusion is to the wellbeing of older people (as well as the rest of us!). Loneliness is a key issue facing older people, and multiple studies have shown that feeling socially connected and engaged is linked with reduced depression and greater life satisfaction generally.

Purpose-built senior living communities obviously offer a high standard of accommodation designed with residents in mind, which in itself can provide a mental boost. However, they also foster a sense of community and enable social participation, for example through the provision of on-site wellbeing facilities and organised activities, making a significant contribution to mental and physical wellbeing.



Loneliness is a key issue, and social connection is vital to wellbeing.



How do you measure the impact of senior living developments on local communities?

Our in-house Analytics and Research team prepares Health Impact Assessments and Economic Impact Assessments in support of planning applications. These carry out data-driven analyses of GP admissions, local expenditure from staff and visitors, the impact of the development on the local housing market and the jobs generated at construction and operational stages, for example, to analyse the health and economic impacts of later living developments.

What legacy do you hope Nexus Planning leaves in the senior living sector?

A meaningful legacy would be for Nexus to be known as one of the most prominent planning consultants in the sector. I'd also like us to have made a sizeable dent in the significant need for more housing for older people, and to have delivered some of the most high quality and exemplar schemes in the sector that will be around for years to come.



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*Dates and venues subject to change

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