

CareTalk

The voice of excellence in social care

Let's Talk Social Care! Issue **119** | March **2023**

Getting The Balance Right

Promoting Diversity in Social Care



In This Issue:



WHY WE SHOULD BE CELEBRATING MORE WOMEN IN SOCIAL CARE

Melanie Weatherley MBE
Co-Chair,
Care Association Alliance



LGBTQ+ AND DEMENTIA IN SOCIAL CARE

Phil Harper
Senior Lecturer in Health and Social Care, Newman University Birmingham



CO-PRODUCTION COUNTS!

Changing Lives



WHAT KEEPS ME AWAKE AT NIGHT

Keymn Whervin
Co-Production Manager,
National Voices

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www.friendindeed.org.uk



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Coming up for the April 2023 issue:

■ LIVING A GOOD LIFE ■ PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST ■ SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND THEIR SPIRITUAL LIVES

Social Care TOP 30

RECOGNISING INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN SOCIAL CARE

2023

Social care needs strong innovative leadership more than ever at this time. The **SOCIAL CARE TOP 30** will give the opportunity to showcase and recognise real leadership and excellence in the sector.

Who's top of the social care charts?

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SHORTLISTED SOCIAL CARE TOP 30 – READERS VOTE!

We will be asking Care Talk readers to vote online for the individual they think should be number one in the top 30 chart. Finalists and guests will be invited to a dinner on 12th October 2023 at the Hilton Bankside, London where the overall winner of the SOCIAL CARE TOP 30 will be announced.

The individual may be from the private, public or third sector and a Chief Executive or other national sector leader.

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO FITS THIS DESCRIPTION?

NOMINATE AT: www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30



www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30

Circulation List

Has this month's Care Talk been read by all your staff? Use our list to be sure!

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- Managing Director
- Registered Manager
- Supervisor
- Care Staff
- Ancillary Staff
- Service Users
- Families

Welcome to the March issue of Care Talk.

As I write this Age UK have released a report, 'Fixing the Foundations', which highlights the stark impact of unmet social care needs for older people, due in part to the chronic workforce shortage.

Sadly this is no surprise and until society can truly appreciate the value of social care and achieve parity of esteem with the NHS, then this bleak situation looks set to worsen.

Achieving equality and reflecting diversity across social care, both for the workforce and those who draw on services, is at the forefront of this month's issue; **Getting the balance right: promoting diversity in social care.**

Co-producing services in social care is crucial when it comes to promoting equality, diversity, accessibility and reciprocity, and is something Keymn Whervin is passionate about. In her article, **What keeps me awake at night** (page 38), Keymn who is the Co-Production Manager at National Voices, talks about how they are working in partnership with sector leaders and those with lived experience, to redress imbalances in health and social care.

Care cultures that are not inclusive can have a devastating impact for staff and the people they support, but especially for gay and lesbian people who are living with dementia. In their article, Phil Harper, Lecturer in Health and Social Care at Newman University, shines a spotlight on **LGBTQ+ and Dementia in Social Care** (page 14), and explains why an intersectional approach should be adopted to ensure all those who use social care feel included and supported.

Despite the fact that women make up the majority of the social care workforce they are woefully unrepresented at senior manager level. In her article on page 10, Melanie Weatherley, Co-Chair at the Care Association Alliance, talks about **Why we should be celebrating more women in social care leadership** and why initiatives such as the Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards are so important in highlighting this. Nominations are now open for this year's awards so please check out their diverse range of categories at www.thewags.co.uk and nominate your inspirational female colleagues!

We do hope you enjoy this issue

Lisa





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The **Care Commissioner** Award • The **Integrated Retirement Community Hero** Award

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Getting the balance right: promoting diversity in social care



**Professor
Martin Green OBE**
Chief Executive, Care England

Social care is suffering from a significant workforce challenge, and the latest data from Skills for Care identified 165,000 vacancies within the sector. As well as these startling figures, we also need to recognise that if our sector is going to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population, we must ensure diversity in the way in which we attract staff. Care work is a destination career for a diverse group of people.

It is important to understand that diversity goes far beyond the usual discussions. To be truly diverse, we must have a comprehensive definition of that concept. Some of the people who are dominant in other sectors are absent within social care, and we must recognise that true diversity is about how we not only reflect the people we support in the make-up of our workforce but also how we reach out to the diversity of talent that exists within local areas.

In social care, we have significant challenges around attracting enough men into our services, and this is an area where we need to focus. I am also mindful that we constantly fish for staff in the same pool as we have always done. We need to think differently and more creatively about how we can reach out to other sectors and sections of the community who could make a very valuable contribution to our services.

One area we could make a real change is engaging people who have had caring responsibilities. These people often have the right qualities and values and understand how to deliver high-quality care. One of the significant challenges is that these people, who could make such an enormous contribution, are often only available for part or half-time work. This leads me to another issue we need to address: the flexibility within our workforce offering. Many people could make an enormous contribution to care, but because they have other responsibilities for families, friends, or in many cases, study, they do not want to be on a full-time contract. If we started to deliver more flexibility, we could attract people who are currently not active in the workforce. Many retired people want to work and could contribute significantly to care but are put off by the fact that part-time work is often at least 17.5 hours.

Another impediment to engaging retired people is how their tax is calculated, and one of the things the government needs to do is a complete review of the tax and benefit system so that work is now an attractive proposition for people who may be retired or who receive some benefits.

There is also an enormous pool of talented people with disabilities who could be effectively incorporated into our workforce. These people will have a real understanding of care, often because they have received it, and they could transform the care sector, not only in terms of their contribution to delivery but also because of the insights they can bring.

I recently went to a care home where they were employing two people with learning disabilities. These colleagues made a considerable contribution to the life of the care home and had a natural rapport with the residents. Sadly, all too often, people with disabilities are overlooked, and their disabilities, rather than their abilities and contributions, are seen by prospective employers.

“We have significant challenges around attracting enough men into our services, and this is an area where we need to focus.”

We should also be cognisant that there are many other sectors where people could significantly contribute if we do some skills and transference training. We often see people moving between the hospitality and care sectors, but we need to broaden the approach and think creatively about other sectors and who can make a contribution to care. I have seen some very successful examples of care providers encouraging people who are leaving the Armed Forces to join the care sector, which is another potential source of staff.

All these different sectors could bring vital people into our services and transform the diversity of those who work in care. The 21st century is one that is characterised by diversity, and we must make sure the care sector reflects that.

Thriving Not Surviving

Care England 2023 Conference & Exhibition
Thursday 16 March 2023

Church House Conference Centre, Westminster, London



'**Thriving not Surviving**' has been chosen as the theme of the next Care England Conference & Exhibition at Church House Conference Centre in Westminster on Thursday 16 March 2023. Planning is now well underway, and invitations have been issued to a select range of influential, high-level sector speakers.

Visit the [Care England website](https://www.careengland.org.uk) for up to date information.

Exhibition and seminars: Learn from the specialists

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The speaker presentations will be relevant to all providers, including those who support older people, people with learning disabilities and those with long term conditions. Non-Care England members are also welcome.

How much does it cost to attend?

- Care England Member: £150.00
- Non-member care providers: £175
- Non-Member: £300.00

We look forward to seeing you there!

For more information, visit www.careengland.org.uk

#CareEnglandConf23 #ThrivingNotSurviving

Why we should be celebrating more women in social care leadership



Melanie Weatherley MBE
Co-Chair
Care Association Alliance

Women make up the majority of senior social care managers in the UK, but how often do we hear about it? As a woman who has worked within the adult social care sector for over 20 years, I find the lack of representation of women in our field alarming. When was the last time you read a good news story about a female care manager who has made great achievements or heard of a woman in health care using her force for good to make real change?

“I can see a real shift in moving towards a more positive, strong female-led senior workforce.”

As a woman working within this crucial and rewarding sector, I’m aware more than most of the need to be more vocal and confident in shouting about our own achievements. Without better representation, how will we encourage more women into the industry? How do we break these barriers and recognise the work that is being done by the incredible women in social care?

The power of role models can’t be overlooked. The lack of seeing female leadership within a predominantly female workforce heavily contributes to the way that the sector is viewed. Without recognising women being in leadership roles, who is there to aspire to? I was honoured to be awarded the inaugural lifetime achievement award from The Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards (WAGS) back in November 2022. The awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise the accomplishments of women in social care and the impact they have in the sector, helping promote gender equity and celebrating the incredible achievements of our female leaders.

We want to see more spotlight on female role models like this. Showcasing the achievements of women in social leadership roles not only helps the sector gain exposure but also acts as a powerful tool for other

women to aspire to. Female leaders must nurture the next generation in order to highlight the vital work we do within the sector and to make it a desirable career option.

Focus must also be placed on both championing our current workforce and using ambassadors to shout about the work we’re doing. Better representation of women in leadership roles starts with us, as women. Self-promotion can be a powerfully strong tool, and with it, can bring a host of good press to the sector. By choosing female role models within our workforce as champions for our sector, we can encourage more people to not only join us in social care, but to join us in senior roles.

And if we’re wanting to drive more women into leadership, the answer lies in mentoring. The value of mentoring within any workplace is crucial, particularly for the social care sector. For many young women who are establishing themselves in new roles, or for those looking for a career change or promotion into a managerial role, mentoring can play a huge part in driving more women into leadership.

Being mentored and coached by a female leader who is respected and admired is invaluable for women who are looking to step into more senior roles or for those who need a motivational push in the right direction. By mentoring women within our organisations; the carers, nurses, the frontline health workers; who aspire to get into more senior positions in the social care sector, we can support and encourage these women to achieve their goals and break the glass ceiling. By establishing a formal mentoring system, I could see real change happening.

Without recognising the vital work we, as women, play in the social care sector, I fear we become undervalued. By providing more transparent career development opportunities, mentorship programmes and offering role models for women to aspire to, I can see a real shift in moving towards a more positive, strong female-led senior workforce.

“If we’re wanting to drive more women into leadership, the answer lies in mentoring.”

Melanie Weatherley MBE is the CEO of Walnut Care – a large care provider in Lincolnshire, Chair of Lincolnshire’s Care Association and Co-Chair of Care Association Alliance.

Supporting diversity across the social care workforce



Oonagh Smyth
CEO
Skills for Care

Skills for Care CEO Oonagh Smyth discusses what social care managers can do to support diversity among their teams.

I'm pleased to see this month's issue of Care Talk focused on promoting diversity in social care and I'm delighted to be able to contribute to this.

Conversations about diversity are always important and they've been particularly pertinent recently as we've been celebrating Race Equality Week and LGBT+ History Month. We've been providing information on how social care managers can support people from different backgrounds both within the workforce and among people who draw on care and support.

Supporting culture and diversity to ensure the workforce is treated equally, feels included and valued, and is supported to stay well and pursue their careers in social care is one of our strategic aims at Skills for Care.

Skills for Care's data tell us that people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds make up 23% of the adult social care workforce, which is higher than the national population. However, they're underrepresented in leadership roles within social care, making up just 16% of all managerial roles.

To have true diversity within the sector, we need to see equality represented at the top levels so that we have people from different backgrounds feeding into strategy, processes, and workplace culture.

Skills for Care's popular Moving Up programme supports managers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to take the next step in their leadership journey. As well as covering practical skills the programme focuses on issues such as networking, self-confidence and personal branding, and is tailored to specifically address the barriers which people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds may face in their career progression.

Recently we've built on the success of our Moving Up programme to also introduce our Forefront programme, which is for people who are in direct care giving roles and are looking to start their leadership journey.

As well as providing learning opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to progress, we're working with employers to help create positive and diverse workplaces which support everyone to flourish.

We're very proud to have led on the development of the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) which is a tool to support managers in measuring the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues. The SC-WRES has nine metrics covering factors such as pay, progression and workplace harassment.

The tool has been piloted across a number of organisations so far and I'm excited to see this progress into the next phase of delivery.

"To have true diversity within the sector, we need to see equality represented at the top levels."

We're also highlighting the importance of compassionate leadership in creating a workplace culture which treats everyone as an individual, with understanding and empathy for the specific circumstances and obstacles they may be facing outside of work.

Being a compassionate leader allows each individual in your team to feel that they're understood and belong in your organisation. Compassionate leadership also creates a safe and open space where colleagues feel they can speak honestly about diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Embracing values based recruitment is also key in creating a positive and diverse workplace culture. Values based recruitment means understanding the organisational values which your organisation stands for, and recruiting people who meet these values. Asking questions at interview about how a person would behave in different situations is a good way to test for values, rather than focusing conversations on hard facts such as qualifications. A focus on values can help to remove unconscious bias, and also removes obstacles that may make it more difficult for some people to progress through the application process – for example, if their background and circumstances mean it's not been possible for them to gain formal qualifications.

Ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds are recruited into, are happy in, and can progress within the social care sector is vital in making sure that we have a social care service which reflects and understand the people that it supports.

It's so important we keep these conversations flowing and continue to look for improvements.

Driving social mobility for equity of opportunities



MEARS

Trina OliverRegional Director - Extra Care
Mears Group

I came to Mears in 2009, initially working in a payroll position in Norwich. My first job was on a YTS scheme as an apprentice hairdresser before becoming an accounts office junior, so I'd come from a fairly standard office background. It's fair to say that prior to joining Mears, I had never considered a career in care.

“Some of our most exceptional carers are returning mums and young people with no previous care experience.”

But that all changed shortly after arriving, as I quickly became interested in the sector and asked to attend the induction training, so I could understand more about what it involved. This led to further training, and it wasn't long until I rolled my sleeves up and began providing ad-hoc care to our service users to support my colleagues whenever the team needed an extra pair of hands for any reason.

That initial opportunity developed into a role as a Compliance Officer and visiting families and service users on a daily basis became permanent. From there, I became a registered CQC manager, then Operations Manager before moving into my current role in 2015.

It's been quite a journey and that's because Mears recognised my commitment in those early days and gave me the opportunity to gain new skills and training for my future career – something I never would have imagined. I hold a Level 5 NVQ in Health & Social Care and have undergone extensive management training.

Mears' recognition as a Top 75 Social Mobility Employer is testament to the importance the organisation places on giving everyone an opportunity – irrespective of their background or existing skills and experience. The emphasis is instead on the individual and the potential they bring – something which is particularly important in care because of the challenges that it can so often present. Who better to provide person-centred care than someone who can bring their whole self to work – their personality, smile and – just like me – roll their sleeves up from the very start?

In my team today, some of our most exceptional carers are returning mums, young people with no previous care experience and people who have simply discovered a passion for caring. All our care staff are paid above the National Living Wage as a minimum and have access to a wealth of benefits, industry leading support and opportunities to progress – something which I'm very proud to champion.

Mears really does take its responsibility to social mobility very seriously and our hope is that wherever we work, we contribute to that community as an employer, a local partner and a driver of opportunity.

Mears gave me the opportunity and I ran with it – and it's wholly down to the culture and environment they've created.

Trina Oliver is Regional Director - Extra Care at Mears Group, which has recently been recognised in the Top 75 Social Mobility Employer Index, for its focus on offering employment, development, and succession opportunities to everyone, irrespective of their background.

Mears Group provides extra care for older people in partnership with the local authority in six locations across England, as well as running Balmoral Place, a purpose-built Supported Living and extra care housing scheme in Northampton.

To find out more about a career in care with Mears, visit: <https://careers.mearsgroup.co.uk/roles-at-mears/senior-care-delivery-operative>



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LGBTQ+ and dementia in social care



Phil Harper
Senior Lecturer in Health
and Social Care
Newman University Birmingham

It is estimated that there are 1.2 million older gay and lesbian people in the UK¹ and as many as 68,000 LGBTQ+ people living with dementia². There are currently very limited statistics for trans and gender diverse individuals living with dementia.

How are LGBTQ+ people with dementia disproportionately effected when accessing social care services?

Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ who experience dementia often face unique challenges when accessing care, many of these can lead to an individual 'going back into the closet' and hiding their gender identity or sexual orientation³. One of the key issues within social care is a lack of understanding of the importance of knowing an individual's gender identity and / or sexual orientation. It is common to hear that 'we treat everyone the same' from care professionals, but this can give the impression that the professional is not adopting a person-centred care approach. LGBTQ+ people with dementia have very specific needs that should not be ignored. These can include, trauma from negative experiences of the past, strained family relations, lack of recognition of the importance of gender identity and affirming support and medication, internalised prejudice and a lack of sensitive provision in social care⁴.

Social care can often be a scary place for LGBTQ+ individuals living with dementia and their loved ones. Environments often are not the most inclusive, for example, memory lanes in care homes that can cause an individual with dementia to re live previous negative events. This is especially an issue for LGBTQ+ individuals who may have had previous traumatic experiences⁴. Awareness around language and inclusive care cultures

is also limited, such as awareness around pronouns and the impacts of gendered language. Same sex partners and recognition of families of choice is also cited as an issue in social care and concern from those accessing social care³. This commonly includes a lack of recognition of same sex partners and of families of choice who might be closer than an individual's biological families.

What is needed to help ensure LGBTQ+ individuals living with dementia's needs are met?

As stated, more work on ensuring care cultures are inclusive is required to ensure parity of outcomes. There is clearly a need for health and social care services to ensure their care is fully inclusive in order to truly meet the needs of everyone who draws on services. More training is also required as it is common for health and social care professionals to state that they feel uncomfortable discussing the needs of the LGBTQ+ community⁵. This may also contribute to the reason as to why health and social care services rarely collect data regarding gender identity and sexuality. These points highlight the need for greater awareness of the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those living with dementia as this is commonly disregarded and overlooked in social care services⁶.

The hope would be that regulatory bodies, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and wider government policy will adopt an approach which considers all aspects of a person's identity, when regulating care. The CQC do commonly explore the need for inclusive services and state that it is an area of focus in inspections⁴. The Equality Act 2010 does also include Sexual Orientation and Gender Assignment as protected characteristics, however, there is limited guidance, especially in social care which can lead to providers often not knowing how to embed this into their services⁷. In 2019 the Equalities Office published a report that highlighted the need for more work on making health and social care services more inclusive for LGBTQ+ individuals. This report has highlighted best practice and gaps in provision. There has been limited work since, especially focusing on social care, this sadly demonstrates a lack of momentum in government and policy in ensuring services are inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community.

It is also important to highlight the challenging environment LGBTQ+, especially trans and non-binary individuals, find themselves in in the UK with regular attacks on rights and policy decisions. In order to move towards a more inclusive future and to ensure everyone who draws on services feels included and supported appropriately, it is essential for an intersectional approach to be adopted at all levels.

“Care cultures that are not inclusive can cause those receiving care to go back into the closet.”



“Awareness around the impact of gendered language is limited.”

For further references see the full article at www.caretalk.co.uk

¹ Semlyen 2016

² Dementia UK and the LGBT Foundation

³ Harper, 2019 and Di Lorito et al 2022

⁴ Harper 2019

⁵ Stewart and O'Reilly 2017

⁶ Cousins, De Vries and Dening 2021

⁷ Hunt et al 2019

Championing diversity in the social care sector



Niharika Noakes
Director
Championing Social Care

The past few years, though challenging, witnessed the social care sector achieve its highest profile in years. As we celebrate the sector overcoming the challenges of the aftermath of COVID, we are getting better at building a positive voice for champions of the social care sector.

“The key to optimising the potential of diverse skillsets lies in celebrating differences.”

At Championing Social Care, we endeavour to celebrate the diversity of the social care sector by providing a unique platform through various impactful initiatives to share the talents, accomplishments, profiles of care homes, fundraising opportunities and myriad successes of individuals providing and receiving care, that come from the common goal of the sector's population.

Our greatest contribution to the sector lies in highlighting the success stories of individuals working in and supported by the care sector, made possible by the diverse talents of our Ambassadors and supporters who come from all parts of the sector.

Even through the hardships faced by the care sector during COVID, we are proud to have been able to sparkle the social care sector with memorable experiences since founding Championing Social Care in 2020. Through our flagship programmes that have touched thousands of care workers and those for whom they care, we have:

- raised over £750,000 at the **Care Sector Fundraising Ball** to support two charities;
- reached over 50 million people through **Care Home Open Week**, with 2,815 care homes participating and visited by over 100 MPs;
- hosted **Care Sector's Got Talent** that was streamed live to nearly 500 people and the final was watched over 1,000 times on YouTube; and,
- recently hosted our new **Christmas Lunch**, which was attended by some 160 guests to celebrate the success stories of many in the care sector.

“The way Championing Social Care celebrates the sector, bringing care leaders together with carers and residents, makes us feel proud to be an integral part of the sector.”

Contestant, CSGT 2022

Care Sector's Got Talent is a showcase of diverse talent from across the care sector. It is often uncommon for care staff or those who receive care to have the opportunity to showcase their talent through such memorable experiences. The show has been a fantastic outlet to support the mental health of people in the care sector. Last year's CSGT winner, Sarabdeep Singh, said “From childhood at the age of nine, I used to perform; it's always been my hobby and it makes me happy”. You can read more about his experience here: <https://caring-times.co.uk/feature/care-sectors-got-talent-the-talented-mr-singh/>

Through **Care Home Open Week**, we aim to enrich the lives of the UK's care home staff, by engaging communities to meet residents and the exceptional care workers that care for them, to show people that the vast majority of care homes provide excellent care and connect well with their local communities.

“The work of the social care sector is a poignant element to our society and Care Home Open Week has brought excitement back into our homes after a difficult year.”

Lorna Badrick, COO, TLC Care

2022's Week demonstrated the huge positives of the care home sector. 100% of participants said that inclusion has helped their wellbeing, and career opportunities were showcased across the 2,400 participating care homes.

Showcasing the brilliant work of care workers is something we try to do as openly and often as we can. **The Care Sector Fundraising Ball** provides us with the perfect opportunity to show our appreciation to all the professionals within the sector and shine a positive light on the milestones, innovations, and achievements of some of the incredible people in the sector.



So far, over £750,000 has been raised for The Care Workers' Charity and Alzheimer's Society across three events. The ball includes entertainment and good food, and many stakeholders, beneficiaries, and key members from the sector share success stories and lived experiences.

Charities need our support more than ever as we band together under the cost of living crisis, and they continue to provide essential services to vulnerable people. Following the success and the impact of the previous years' events, we have the ambition to deliver an even greater, socially conscious event that is considerate of our environmental impact, and support wider charities and social enterprises wherever we can.

#Sparkle for Social Care is a social media campaign that started during COVID to share positive stories and celebrate the contributions from the social care sector. The initial launch reached over 20,000 people, and bringing this campaign back year on year allows us to continue to highlight the incredible work of the social care sector.



The key to optimising the potential of diverse skillsets lies in celebrating differences, not glossing over them. Championing Social Care is proud of the diversity of its team and aspires to promote this impact to the wider care community by sharing our success story of demonstrating and establishing diversity in the workplace, and celebrate the strengths of our Organising Committee and Ambassadors and the novel work they do. Embracing differences and enhancing representation makes for a more equitable society and a better world of social care.

“Our greatest contribution lies in highlighting the success stories of individuals working in and supported by the care sector.”

Achieving one voice together



Simon Tobin
Autism Trainer and Ambassador
and Unity Representative

My name is Simon. I am an autism awareness speaker, an expert by experience being autistic myself. I have my own business delivering autism training, and I am also supported by and work for Achieve together.

At Achieve together we strongly believe that working together with people drawing on support is the building block of great quality support. This is why we have a dedicated Co-production Team, of which I am a part, where we work together to represent the voices of people supported by Achieve together. We make sure that people have their say, are included in decisions, policy making, projects, initiatives and more. We also make sure that people are seen and respected as equal partners in the design and provision of their own support.

“Organisations must always ask the question #IsThisCoproduction?”



Members of Unity, Campaign 4 Change and Achieve together. L-R **Gillian Coffey** (Unity Representative), **Elmi Terjavainen** (Coproduction Manager, Achieve together), **Simon Tobin** (Autism Trainer & Ambassador, Unity), **Esme Barnett** (Campaign 4 Change Representative), **Stephen Adamson** (Sports Ambassador, Campaign 4 Change), **Julien Baird** (Quality of Life Ambassador, Campaign 4 Change), **Michael Fullerton** (Achieve together)

“People we support are always involved in hiring new support team members.”

We have two representative groups of people we support – Unity, a co-production group working internally within the organisation, and Campaign 4 Change, a self-advocacy group representing the rights and views of people with learning disabilities and autistic people nationally. Members of both groups are paid for all work that they engage in.

In 2022, Unity members were really busy with a range of activities and events to promote the Wheel of Engagement, our framework for holistic, great quality support. Early in the year, I presented autism and learning disability training to Achieve together’s Board of Directors together with Mary Woodall (Campaign 4 Change, and Learning Disability England (LDE) Representative Body Member). This took place in their offices in London and was a big success.

We also have our very own superhero, Captain Co-production, who sweeps in to ensure co-production is embedded across Achieve together. The Captain Co-production animation created by Unity was presented across different events and conferences.

Unity also helped deliver several Driving Up Quality events around the country to promote the Wheel of Engagement, with a real-life Captain Co-production played by Unity Representatives to deliver the message of the importance of co-production between team members and the people Achieve together support. Unity, as part of this, has launched a #IsThisCoproductio campaign to encourage everyone to consider that with any planning or decision - is this co-produced?

Each month we promote a different theme from the Wheel of Engagement such as physical and mental wellbeing, goals and dreams, employment, and personal identity. Unity and Campaign 4 Change create a podcast to discuss the Wheel of Engagement topic of the month, which is available on social media and podcast apps. I’m also part of the Autism Strategy group of Achieve together which aims to create a plan on how to support autistic people in the best way possible, including autism training which I will help deliver.

Unity is also very involved with helping create company policies, procedures and documentation. We recently assisted the HR department to review the recruitment procedure, ensuring people we support are always involved in hiring new support team members. Unity Representatives also help attract new candidates at recruitment events.



Captain Co-production aka Alex Roberts

Campaign 4 Change members presented at a number of national events last year, including LDE annual conference, where they promoted people with profound and multiple learning disabilities being included and visible in society. Samir El-Ziftawy, who was involved in the conference, has profound and multiple learning disabilities and demonstrated the need to ‘remove the cloak of invisibility’ that surrounds people with profound and multiple learning disabilities in our communities and within learning disability policy.

I feel it is important for everybody’s voices to be heard, and support provider organisations must ensure people who draw on social care support are involved and included in decision making and always ask the question #IsThisCoproductio.

“Captain Co-production sweeps in to ensure co-production is embedded across Achieve together.”



WAGS

**WOMEN ACHIEVING GREATNESS
IN SOCIAL CARE**

2023

★ **21st NOVEMBER 2023 – THE MARRIOTT GROSVENOR SQUARE HOTEL, LONDON** ★

“The majority of staff within the sector are women, and the awards is a great way to recognise their significant accomplishments.”

Professor Vic Rayner, CEO, National Care Forum

THE CATEGORIES

- ★ The **Business Woman of the Year** Award ★ The **Corporate Leader** Award ★
- ★ The **Third Sector Leader** Award ★ The **New Business** Award ★
- ★ The **Girl Power** Award ★ The **Woman in Tech** Award ★
- ★ The **Outstanding Partner** Award ★ The **Rising Star** Award ★
- ★ The **Talent Development** Award ★ The **Communications Guru** Award ★
- ★ The **HR and Recruiter** Award ★ The **Social Change Agent** Award ★
- ★ The **Equality and Diversity** Award ★ The **Wellbeing at Work** Award ★
- ★ The **Social Care Superwoman** Award ★ The **Inspirational Volunteer** Award ★
- ★ The **Lifetime Achievement** Award ★



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Getting the balance right between pay and responsibility of the job



Karolina Gerlich
CEO
The Care Workers Charity

Perfectly quoted in the Financial Times last month 'We need to see social care as an investment not a cost.'

"With everyone spinning so many plates it leaves an already tired workforce simply exhausted."

Often the ugly sister to her more popular sister the NHS, it becomes clearer by the day that social care isn't an appendage, it's a service that when done well is part of the backbone of our society.

We cannot escape the ever-increasing ageing population; it is a fact and will keep growing year on year. And yes, throwing money at the same old problems doesn't work, it's real strategic investment that looks at a sustainable workable system that benefits both those working in the sector as well as those supported by it.

Concerns about the social care system even made it into the Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year message where he urged the government to take action to fix the country's broken social care system.

Perhaps more poignant was his quote: *"Caring goes to the heart of what it means to be human. It is hard, but it can also be the most life-giving thing we ever do. It comes back to that essential lesson: we need each other."*

We really do. From someone receiving home care, residential nursing care, mental health or learning disability care. The needs and the situations can be as varied as they are complex, but one thing is for sure local authorities cash starved budgets continue to exacerbate the situation.

Short-term sticking plasters are provided as a solution but in actual fact they do little to help the sector plan for the long term. With everyone spinning so many plates it leaves an already tired workforce simply exhausted.

Billions of pounds have been made available to health and social care, one thing we do know is that a large proportion of that money is going towards discharging patients from hospital. Yet how can that be properly implemented when domiciliary care is dealing with a recruitment crisis just like its residential care counterparts?

How did we get to this under staffed over-worked system? Is it because we undervalue the work of a carer, or even worse, is it because we undervalue the worth of those who draw on social care?

Rishi Sunak was asked on Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg earlier in January: *"Would you do the job of a care worker for £18,000 a year?"* he didn't answer the question.

Of course, we know he wouldn't. Before this cost of living crisis, a quarter of care workers were living in poverty. It is officially a low paid occupation. But we know the value of a carer for the people that draw on social care. Those supported and cared for would value a carer as priceless. However, do carers themselves feel valued?

Being responsible for the lives and wellbeing of others is something every carer carries around with them. There isn't an off button, they don't stop caring because they have gone home. Often, they sacrifice their own life, and their own time to care, the demands are relentless, and the negative affects on mental wellbeing enormous. This coupled with the cost-of-living crisis, long-covid, strikes, you name it, specifics of which just create more pressure, more demands and more desperation.

The responsibility of a carer is to create a connection where someone feels safe, not lonely, cared for, and even loved. It isn't about doing everything for an individual, it's about supporting independence and enablement to foster an improved quality of life, for most in the final chapter of their lives. Surely the same principal should apply to supporting a care worker.

Value isn't about a clap or a thank you, and yes, we can acknowledge the access and funding to professional development, training and career progression. But it doesn't help with time, more time to be more than just a carer without the associated pressures?

"Is it it because we undervalue the worth of those who draw on social care?"

Building self-belief and resilience together



ASSIST
TRUST

Michelle Docwra

Housing Officer
Assist Trust

At Assist Trust increasing independence for our members is at the centre of our practice. We believe that we are all equal citizens and that everyone has the right to access the same opportunities as everyone else.

“We are all equal citizens and everyone has the right to access the same opportunities.”

Assist Trust promotes a supported living model of care through enabling our members to have as much independence in their homes as possible. Our housing team locate appropriate accommodation and members work on their daily living skills during group time. When in their new home, members are supported by external agencies and are able to put to use the skills they have developed at Assist Trust. Nicole, one of our members who lives in an Assist Trust property said, *“I can do my own clothes washing, which is something I learned to do at Assist Trust.”*

Our staff provide the support required at first and then gradually remove that support as it becomes unnecessary. This is a dynamic process and support can be fully reintegrated if required.



“They are a visible neighbour and taking their rightful place as members of society.”



Assist Trust are keen to find accommodation for our members which puts their independence at the forefront. We look for properties which are on good bus routes, have easy access to nearby food shops, and which will allow the members to be safe and secure in their home. Nicole said, *“It’s useful having a supermarket over the road. I go there quite often. There’s a pub up the road and I have my lunch there some days. I was travel trained to get the bus to Assist Trust in the mornings.”*

Assist Trust’s model for supported living ensures that adults with learning disabilities are fully integrated into their local community. They are a visible neighbour, engaging with local amenities, and taking their rightful place as members of society.

We encourage our members to aim high and we put in place all the support we can to help members achieve their goals. Tommy has found groups at Assist Trust useful in giving him greater independence at home. *“I always iron my shirts now and I do my own cooking. I learned in groups how to do that. I use a dishwasher after practicing at Assist Trust.”*

By treating adults as adults we take an enthusiastic and positive approach to supporting our members. We try to challenge them to set high but realistic targets and support them to increase their self-confidence in the realisation of those targets. Together we build self-belief and resilience.

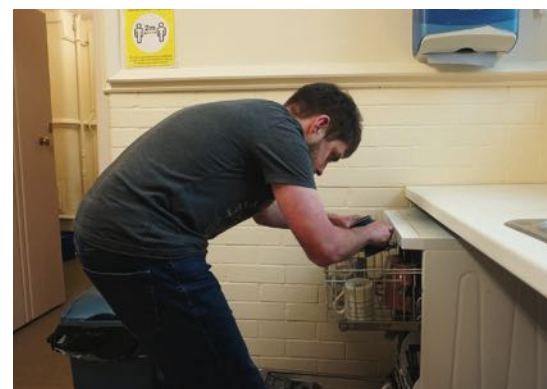
As well as the groups which are run at Assist Trust there is also a dedicated work team which looks for housing opportunities. Using focused outcome plans which are updated regularly, members of the housing team are able

to identify those members who have expressed a desire to progress towards independent living. We also keep in close contact with parents and guardians and the local council to ensure that all stake holders’ viewpoints are heard. This collaborative process is critical to attaining the greatest impact for our members’ progression.

One of our members, Harry, said, *“Michelle was good. She spoke to me a lot and she was supportive. She spoke to my parents a lot, too. The house I live in now isn’t too far to walk to my parents’ houses.”*

It is vital to ensure that all care-givers for our members are supported to work towards the same goals.

By centring our member’s needs, Assist Trust supports them to use and elevate their voice and determine how they want to engage with the community. Our focused work teams then work with the member to ensure that they are seen, heard, and valued by society.





Join the National Care Forum

Make sure you are aware of all the latest guidance, thinking and intelligence in response to the fast changing situation with COVID-19

NCF members benefit from:

- Policy updates - we manage and interpret the latest policy and guidance for you
- Weekly Zoom Calls and Regular Briefings for your senior team
- Dedicated Forum groups
- Real time peer support across the membership
- NCF is the leading voice for the not for profit care and support sector
- NCF is a trusted voice working with the government, DHSC, LGA and PHE to ensure, regulation and guidance is relevant and reflects the needs of the care sector
- NCF will be ensuring that the voice and experience of members influence the critical social care reform agenda, advocating for experience led change with the Secretary of State, Minister and senior policy makers
- NCF members are supportive, collaborative, connected organisations
- NCF are strategic leaders in Digital Social Care and have dedicated digital transformation staff to support your digital transformation journey
- NCF #HeretoCare Campaign is ensuring the amazing work happening in the sector is being recognised at national & local government and in the media

Not-for-profit and voluntary sector care providers face different issues from private and statutory sector agencies.

NCF is the national association that represents only not-for-profit and voluntary sector care organisations.

Get in Touch & ask about joining the National Care Forum

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for not-for-profit care
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NCF works directly with not for profit care & support providers across the UK supporting members to improve social care provision & enhance the quality of life, choice, control & well-being of people who use care services.

A National Carers Strategy would help raise the profile of unpaid carers



Helen Walker
CEO
Carers UK

Despite significant pressures from all manner of sources, our health and social care workforce carry out incredible work for our society every single day, and their work is rightly recognised and commended by the Government and general public as really important.

The breadth of skills and knowledge, as well as the compassion shown by health and care staff for others, enables hundreds of thousands of people with significant health or care needs to get better and recover, or enjoy quality of life with the support they need in place.

Usually, alongside the many individuals health and care workers are supporting, is a dedicated family member or friend providing unpaid care at home – an unpaid carer. Typically, they're at hand to support their older, disabled or seriously ill loved one with everyday practical tasks, administrative help and emotional support. Many will be forgoing aspects of their own life in order to provide this care, such as breaks, social activities, maintaining their own health or even paid work.

Despite also playing a significant role in providing care, too often unpaid carers tell us they feel they are completely overlooked, particularly by the Government. They find this frustrating for many reasons, not least, it means they lack support that could make their caring role a lot easier to manage on a day-to-day basis.

"Unpaid carers tell us they feel they are completely overlooked, particularly by the Government."

Therefore, we were very pleased to see the focus of the role of unpaid carers highlighted in the House of Lords' recent report: A "gloriously ordinary life". The committee also calls for an urgent reform in adult social care – something that governments have failed to adequately address for years and is long overdue.

"4.3 million people begin an unpaid caring role every year."

The report highlights Carers UK's proposal for a funded National Carers Strategy. With startling recent research showing that 4.3 million people begin an unpaid caring role every year, Carers UK believes a National Carers Strategy in place would help raise the profile of unpaid carers as a group, and ensure that in a variety of different situations they get the support and recognition that they deserve.

Having better identification of unpaid carers in health settings would also help to address equality of recognition. A carer brings a wealth of knowledge about their loved ones' condition, their treatments, daily life and communication style that could enable health workers to better understand a health concern and treat it. The House of Lords report recommends that Government and NHS England create incentives for secondary and primary care to identify unpaid carers, and including this status on their patient record would make a big difference. This kind of systematic drive to identification of unpaid carers acknowledges the important role they play in supporting the health of others, and how carers' own health is impacted.

The report recommends a review of Carer's Allowance, the benefit for those caring for 35 hours or more each week, something Carers UK has long been calling for. Unpaid carers need support to stay in work where they want to, and a solution to the sharp cliff edge of the earnings threshold that currently means earning even £1 over the threshold sees a 100% loss of benefit. During a difficult cost-of-living crisis, with Carer's Allowance at such a low level, hundreds of thousands of carers face choosing heating or eating, and deserve better financial support.

In order to achieve long term equality of recognition, Carers UK believes unpaid caring should be the tenth protected characteristic to ensure carers cannot be discriminated against because of their caring responsibilities.

It cannot be understated that a well-functioning social care system is the essential backbone of our society, with the potential to improve life drastically for people with health and care needs, as well as unpaid carers and health and care workforce supporting them.

New care record supports providers in delivering more joined up care across London



Shared Care Records are joining up patient information across different care settings in London, supporting NHS clinicians to deliver safer and more effective care to patients.

Known as the London Care Record (LCR), it has recently been piloted across three Integrated Care Boards in London to join up information across different care settings and support clinicians in delivering safer and more effective care to patients; reducing delays to treatment and a loss of precious hours in care delivery due to duplication of workload.

The LCR is a collection of patient information that eligible care providers can access for a more holistic view of a patient's health enabling more joined up care for service users as they move through different parts of the health and social care system.

"The LCR offers benefits to both service users and care providers" explains Harpreet Shergill, Senior Programme Manager at NHS England – London.

"Service users receive the care they need more quickly, improving the patient experience and patient outcomes. Care providers can make more confident and efficient decisions about a patients' care, freeing up valuable time and resources."

"Additionally, by eliminating duplicate assessments and unnecessary referrals, efficiencies are realised across the entire health and care system, ultimately supporting better patient outcomes."

The LCR pilots completed in mid-February.

"The LCR offers benefits to both service users and care providers."

To access the LCR, eligible care providers will need to have completed the annual Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) to Standards Met to prove that they are keeping patient data safe and protecting themselves adequately from cyber-attacks. More information about the DSPT and how to register is available at: <https://www.dsptoolkit.nhs.uk/Help/3>

London Care Record in action

Michael Armstrong, Managing Director at Haverling Care Homes has been part of the LCR pilot and has seen the benefits in action.

"Service users receive the care they need more quickly."

"When we are waiting on medication to be delivered, we no longer need to call the pharmacy and then the GP to establish if the prescription has been raised by the GP and sent to the pharmacist. We can now see this information automatically in the London Care Record saving my team a lot of time which can now be better spent with our residents."

Sutton Court Care Home in south-west London also took part in one of the LCR pilots.

"When our residents are discharged from hospital...we can have access to this information automatically in the London Care Record which helps to prevent...delays." explains Marie Bannister, Registered Manager.

"We find this to be a much better outcome for the residents but also frees up beds quicker at the hospital."

A third pilot site for the LCR was Heathlands Care Home in north-east London. Registered Manager Ronniel Alarilla had this to say about the benefits he experienced by using the LCR:

"Recently one of our residents had to be admitted to hospital. Thanks to the London Care Record we could see the patient summaries from both the London Ambulance Service and Emergency Department so could check their condition which gave the team peace of mind. Crucially it also gave us the information we need to effectively plan their care when they return to the home."



The London Care Record: virtual webinar 22 March 2023, 2pm - 3pm

Find out more about the London Care Record (LCR) and how it can support you in delivering more joined up care.

Hear from care providers across London about their lived experience of the LCR and the benefits they have realised.

**Scan the QR code for more information
and to register**



Inspiring future rising stars



Ellie Bennett

Lead Senior Support Worker
Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme

After becoming a Senior Support Worker at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme three years ago, Ellie Bennett quickly progressed to managing a team of 16 care workers supporting 24 residents living across two households. Here Ellie, a finalist in the 'Rising Star' category at the Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards, tells us about her thoughts on nurturing and retaining social care leaders of the future.

Like many who work in social care, embarking on a career in the sector stemmed from a desire to have a positive impact in other people's lives. Growing up in Newcastle-under-Lyme, I became used to caring for my grandma, who had dementia and lived at home, but I started working in pubs before I began a job as a support worker. This perspective is useful when considering how to attract and inspire future care leaders and address the recruitment challenge facing the care industry.

One method of making people aware of the opportunities available in social care that has been successful for Belong is building links with local educational institutions. I know that many support workers and nurses across Belong villages returned to a full-time role after undertaking a placement or apprenticeship while in education. Social media has also proved invaluable in letting people know about roles as they become available.

Providing opportunities for learning, development and career progression is important both for motivating and retaining colleagues, as well as ensuring that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver a top quality service.

New starters receive a dedicated mentor who provides direction, guidance and support. When I began my role at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, my mentor was Catherine, who was Lead Senior Support Worker on the household that I worked on at the time, and she was instrumental in my developing the skills that I would need to progress to my current position, including conducting assessments in the community and people management.

Each Belong village also has its own Practice Development Facilitator, whose role is identifying training requirements, as well as opportunities for improvement and development, to drive standards of care at the village. This is done through observation and working with the household leads.

Belong's policy is to 'grow our own', so we look to recruit internally where possible and provide tailored development plans for each colleague. When I progressed to my role as Lead Senior Support Worker, Catherine became Practice Development Facilitator.

"My mentor Catherine was instrumental in my developing the skills that I would need to progress."

While people are drawn to a career in social care because they are caring and compassionate, it can be a challenging calling at times, and colleagues will need to have financial security and emotional well-being in order to consider a lifelong career in the sector. For this reason, Belong provides a benefits package that includes an employee assistance programme, which offers counselling services and supports personal and professional development, as well as discounted use of the on-site facilities in the village hub and meals on shift. There should be a role for front-line workers in shaping future benefits packages by saying what is important to them.

What is often more important for motivation is what it is like to work in a care setting, including having colleagues who are supportive, work well together in a team, and share the same vision and values. Recruitment and selection should therefore be based on identifying people with these values. For example, when candidates come for interview, we ask them to bring with them two objects that they hold dear to them.

One of Belong's principal values is putting the customer at the heart of everything we do, and part of creating the right culture is reinforcing this wherever possible, including celebrating people who go the extra mile for customers and colleagues. One example of this is the annual Belong Champion Awards, which took place recently and saw colleagues from across the region come together for a glamorous awards ceremony and after party to recognise the achievements of people working in all roles at Belong villages.

Connecting communities through diversification



Tunstall

Gavin Bashar
UK Managing Director
Tunstall Healthcare

There are many benefits that can be reaped when it comes to workforce diversification, and the social care sector is no exception. A diverse social care workforce, particularly in terms of encouraging the next generation to consider a career in the sector, will see better engagement between citizens and care professionals and greater productivity.

Through diversity we'll help to drive a workforce that is more able to consider differences between communities, including languages and cultures. The workforce will be able to implement effective services through the adoption of a multitude of new working practices, including technology solutions in community care and beyond. This will support us in continuing to meet the needs of our growing and ageing population.

Gavin Bashar, UK Managing Director at Tunstall Healthcare, discusses why diversity is crucial to enabling the social care sector to encourage and adopt technology-based solutions, and make a shift change that can create a ripple effect across care provision.

“Health and care inequalities can cause communities to become disenfranchised with service providers.”

Diversifying through technology

Technology can allow care providers to more effectively meet the needs of a wide range of individuals and communities, in a personalised and supportive way. The importance of technology in service delivery across the health and care landscape shouldn't be underestimated, particularly when it comes to putting people in control of decisions made about their health and care needs.

However, a cultural shift is required if the sector is to fully embrace and reap the benefits that digital solutions can provide. As the sector workforce diversifies, this will drive the number of professionals who are interested in using technology to support better service provision and their ability to engage citizens with different solutions and ways of working.

Diversity is an increasing factor in attracting and retaining staff, and diverse teams are proven to be smarter, more innovative and more socially aware. As the sector faces high vacancy rates, encouraging more people to join and remain in the sector, will make adopting and scaling the right technology easier and will support many resources, increase utilisation, and improve capacity across the care system, to provide effective care. The establishment and progression of a diverse workforce will enable us to build robust methodologies for analysing and using data effectively. This will help to improve decision making across all parts of the system and ensure that data is held securely, outcomes are improved and privacy is not compromised.

Diversification, outcomes and engagement

As the workforce grows and technology becomes more standard practice for care provision, we'll see the benefits translated to other parts of the system. This is particularly true when it comes to engaging with vulnerable people who rely on social care services.

Experience matters but not in the traditional sense. While there are many key facets involved in the development and transformation of services, the experiences of patients, the workforce, and the entire community must be at the centre of every decision that is made. If we align with these stakeholders and their lived experiences, we can begin to change the health and social care landscape for the better.

Health and care inequalities can cause communities to become disenfranchised with service providers, for example problems can arise because of travel, logistics and even linguistic challenges. Diversification within the workforce can work to reduce these inequalities as there will be more capacity to deliver bespoke approaches to different localities and communities.

A broader workforce may also be more relatable to different communities which can in turn drive communication and engagement between professionals and the people they care for. By identifying the diverse needs of citizens and communities, social care providers and operators will be more likely to deliver better services and improve the user experience. If the entire ecosystem works in harmony and we grow the workforce, it'll mean that we're better equipped to meet the expectations of our population when it comes to care delivery.

For more information, please visit
<https://www.tunstall.co.uk>

Maintaining sibling relationships



Martin Leitch
Head of Fostering
Five Rivers Child Care

Rachel De Souza's Siblings in Care report highlighted that one in three children are separated from their siblings when they come into care. This statistic is shocking. Sibling relationships are often important and separation can seriously impact children's sense of belonging and identity.

In response to the report, Five River's Care Leaver Hannah (19) shared her experience of being separated from her siblings on the Children's Commissioner's website. In the blog, she said: *"I remember thinking, you can't take him away. You can't split us up, and this isn't right. No one asked, and no one listened. I felt brushed to the side."*

Sadly, Hannah's experience is shared by many children across the country. Finding suitable families for children in care has always been challenging, and in the wake of a foster carer recruitment crisis, it's more complex than ever.

The increase in children coming into care and the national shortage of foster carers has led to a short supply of suitable families. The global pandemic, subsequent societal changes, and mounting financial pressures also reduce the number of fostering households. The requirement for children to have their own bedrooms further reduces the number of fostering families with more than one spare room.

At Five Rivers, we follow a thorough process to find suitable families for children in care. Placement matching is an area we will not compromise on, as we know how important it is to fully understand a child's needs and how best to meet them to ensure stable, long-term solutions which are in their best interest.

"I remember thinking, you can't take him away. You can't split us up."

Unfortunately, when looking for homes for larger sibling groups, finding a foster carer with the space to keep them together can be even more challenging. We address this by working in partnership with Local Authorities and Foster Carers to find creative, meaningful solutions to ensure regular contact and communication between the siblings.

"Separation can seriously impact children's sense of belonging and identity."

Establishing and maintaining good communication channels is essential in preserving siblings' bonds. Facilitating good communication between social workers and children is also vital to helping a child feel heard and helping them to understand the situation and the next steps.

At Five Rivers, it's routine practice for our staff to encourage and support young people to use technology to speak to their siblings regularly. This is not a statutory requirement but is a core component of our care planning. There is a recommendation in the Siblings in Care report for 'clear and practical' recommendations for maintaining sibling bonds, which we'll look at further.

Another example of how we're helping siblings stay together is through creative, partnership-based commissioning. In Dorset, for example, we are working with two sisters who foster with us and live close to each other. The sisters jointly took on a sibling group of three; one child lives with one foster carer, and two young siblings live with the other sister.

Whilst all three siblings do not live together, they are now part of an extended, blended family who see each other most days. Similarly, we have two Midlands-based foster carers living in the same village and caring for a sibling group regularly seeing each other.

The findings from the report are tragic, as every professional working in children's services tries their hardest to keep siblings together. I hope the recommendations in the report will be embraced and help to bring about a positive change to the experiences of children in care. In the short term, we have to never waiver in advocating for children's rights and finding creative ways to keep them together.

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Protecting our children in the pandemic



Chris Campbell
WAKEFIELD COUNCIL

Social Care Covid Hero

When Chris Campbell heard he had won a Children & Young People Awards Covid Hero Award, he was actually on holiday in Tenerife. But we can forgive him given that, because according to his manager, he was the backbone of Wakefield Council’s Child Protection Locality Team for the duration of the pandemic.

And yet, it was only at the age of 30 that Chris thought there must be more to life than factory work and took himself off to do a degree. After a Master’s in Social Work, he started work in the area of disability before moving into child protection. Four or five months into this job, the pandemic arrived:

“So, when Covid-19 arrived, three managers had to shield and others split time between office and home. But I’m someone who prefers an office environment so I came in every day. What that actually meant was when things needed to be put in place, especially PPE, plus where social workers needed an immediate response to something, I was the go-to.”

Child Protection is never an easy area, as we all know from newspaper headlines, so how on earth was it managed during the pandemic given how critical home visits must be?

“Pre Covid-19, a visit meant seeing a child in the home environment with all the checks and balances that social work demands. Suddenly we were faced with families not wanting us in because of worries about infection and some families using it as an excuse to not allow us in. So

senior management decided we could do visits virtually if a family currently had Covid-19. And things like Child Protection Conferences and Care Reviews were also held virtually.”

PPE was a huge issue, of course, and Chris ended up being the person social workers came to for their supplies because he was always the visible face. When hand sanitiser was running low, he walked into a local petrol station one morning and bought a job-lot of 50 bottles because they had just had a delivery. Chris was the guy ordering and delivering all the PPE, and dashing about borrowing supplies where he could.

How frustrating and exhausting was it to always be the visible face?

“Child Protection is never an easy area, so how on earth was it managed during the pandemic?”

“The most frustrating aspect was dealing with anxious practitioners. Social workers weren’t overly happy to be going into people’s houses during a national pandemic when most other professionals weren’t and frankly, that needs to be said. We were then obviously faced with families asking why they should let us in when other health practitioners weren’t visiting.”

Chris could only reply that he and the team have a legal responsibility to see a child and for the most part, families were willing to present the children to be seen, maybe from a distanced doorstep or a window or Zoom call.

By this point in our chat, I tentatively point out that I might have started to feel resentful about how much I was doing while others were at home, but Chris is quick to say there simply wasn’t time to think deeply about anything and that what he did was very much appreciated by manager and colleagues alike:

“I’m a person who likes to serve a purpose...to be needed. Everyone who came to work stepped up. Yes, I was running around collecting and delivering PPE and making decisions, but social workers were out there covered in plastic from head to toe to see a child. I was just a cog in the bigger machine, so it would be hard to feel resentful because that was the contribution I could make.”

Chris’s contribution, small though he believes it to be, has been rewarded in the big way it absolutely deserves.



Debra Mehta



PJ Care's supply chain of hope



Daria Drygas
PJ CARE



Social Care Covid Hero

Before I spoke with Great British Care Award Covid Hero winner, Daria Drygas, I'm ashamed to admit I had no real idea what a Procurement Manager does other than it must surely be about buying things.

How wrong I was, and Daria hopes that this general misunderstanding will now be better addressed due to the importance of the role during the pandemic.

So what does a PM do?

"Well, we manage the supply chain for the company in order to make sure all departments have everything needed to carry on with day to day operations. There's a constant flow of not only goods but services that's crucial. We're also vital in cross-team communication providing lots of support. We also have to make sure the specification of any request is correct, alongside achieving value for money because at the end of the day, it's a business. Really, people tend to think the job is clerical, but it's actually strategic."

And of course, supplier relationships proved unbelievably important in the pandemic when it came to the endless issue of sourcing PPE which often led Daria down the pathways of Ebay, Amazon and European providers. She forged great relationships with many of them and they often went way beyond to help, becoming friends in the face of the challenge.

Originally from Poland, Daria has worked for PJ Care for 16 years, first joining as a care assistant. She moved into admin and then accounts and finally procurement which she loves because she sees herself as both a people person and a problem solver. But the pandemic problem was on a whole other level:

"When surgical gowns couldn't be sourced, Daria came up with the maxi length raincoats."

"Covid-19 was the toughest time in my career and my life because especially in the early stages it was a complete unknown. It was quickly clear that the supply chain would never be the same again. You immediately had to get a grip on everything, with constant stock monitoring."

Lead times and prices were excessive and counterfeit products were hitting the market at breakneck speed which meant many hours spent on every single order verifying certification. It was incredibly stressful and challenging."

And yet despite the stress, Daria took on every difficulty and doggedly found answers. So, when surgical gowns were needed and couldn't be sourced, Daria came up with the alternative of maxi length raincoats that were disposable and also gowns that were PU coated washable up to 50 times in high temperatures.

Daria also stepped in to work shifts as a care assistant back on the floor which was certainly harder given having to wear a mask for a full 12 hour shift. Calmly chatting with me, it's obvious very little really phases Daria because she's one of life's hard working doers who won't take a 'no' lying down.

So how did she cope with all of the pressure?

"With any spare time, I would go for walks in the beautiful countryside around Milton Keynes with my husband and our dog. We love exploring the English countryside and also how kind and approachable the English people are."

As for her future, Daria is settled in Milton Keynes and hopes that with the growth of the company, the procurement department will expand and continue to deliver quality in supporting the residents, carers, business and industry.

"I love my job," she said at the end of the interview, "and I truly don't think I deserve the award I won because I wasn't on the frontline."

Reckon we've all been lately learning about the interdependencies of a frontline!



Debra Mehta

From carer to care business

How franchisee Sarah climbed the care career ladder



Sarah
Wichkam
WALFINCH

"I love care," says Sarah Wichkam – and it's powered her career from care professional to care business owner. Sarah now runs her own business as the Walfinch home care franchisee for the Suffolk Coastal area and is opening a second Walfinch franchise in Norwich.

Twenty years ago, Sarah, from Blythburgh, near Southwold, was working as a live-in carer and personal assistant.

She fell in love with the care industry and decided to make it her career, going on to run a care home where she managed a team of nurses. She is still a member of the British Nursing Association, which she joined in 1996.

From the care home, she moved on to manage a local office for a national care company. *"They told me to run it as if it was my own business, so I did, and we won their branch of the year award 14 years running,"* Sarah says.



However, when the company was taken over, Sarah decided to move on, and took a job with a much smaller domiciliary care agency. *"I soon realised that if the agency owner could do this, so could I,"* says Sarah.

She began thinking about running her own business. *"I had loved the feeling of being part of a bigger company but enjoyed being able to make my own business decisions, so I decided a home care franchise would provide the combination of business ownership and being part of something bigger,"* she says.

Now Sarah has a team of over 50, and the expansion into Norwich means she will be recruiting more. Walfinch Suffolk Coastal recently achieved a 'Good' rating from industry regulator the Care Quality Commission.

Having started as a care professional herself, Sarah knows what life is like for her team and uses her knowledge and skills to support them as well as clients.

"My experience of providing care in people's own homes and care homes has given me invaluable knowledge," she says. "Even after more than 20 years in the care sector I love the variety that each day brings and I am still passionate about delivering care with empathy and compassion to the local community."

"Twenty years ago Sarah was working as a live-in carer and personal assistant."

Sarah is a living example of how to climb the care career ladder. The number of jobs in adult social care will increase by 27% to 480,000 to reach around 2.27 million by 2035, says Skills for Care.

That means plenty of career opportunities, and they are open to people with no previous qualifications – which is rare today. People who stay within the sector and show the right aptitudes can progress quickly to become senior carers and Registered Managers, for whom pay ranges from £30,600 to £41,800. They could even go on to run their own care businesses, like Sarah.

"Provided candidates show the right qualities and aptitudes we don't look for previous care experience or qualifications because we provide training and career development, but whether they want to be care professionals or franchisees, they must pass The Mum Test," says Amrit Dhaliwal, Chief Executive of Walfinch. *"When recruiting we always ask ourselves, 'Would I be happy with this person looking after my mum?' If so we may well be able to work together."*

Walfinch is also introducing a scheme that incentivises staff to stay and eventually become franchisees by reducing the £27,000+VAT franchise investment fee by 10% for each year (up to a maximum of five) that a carer remains in its team. By year five the investment will have dropped to £13,500 – and the carer will have invaluable experience of how the system works.

Sarah says: *"Care has been a great career for me, so I know the unique rewards that a care career offers."*

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The wisdom of oral healthcare



Rachel Lish

TRAINING PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AND CLINICAL LEAD, ORAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT FOR THE NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA



Some things never leave you, do they? I had four fillings under gas and air at the dentist's when I was about 10 years old and have dreaded The Chair ever since. So, all my life I've done the quick morning and bedtime brush with brief forays into flossing whenever guilt sets in. And in this I know I'm definitely not alone!

So, I guess it came as no surprise to read the findings of a CQC report from 2019 entitled Smiling Matters. Having spoken with managers, staff, service users and their families (within residential settings) to find out experiences of oral care, it was discovered that:

52% of care homes did not have a policy in place to promote and protect oral health.

73% of care plan reviews did not cover oral health.

47% of staff had never received training in oral health care.

Not great news when you consider the sobering fact that poor oral health is linked to a growing number of health conditions including stroke, dementia, pregnancy outcomes and some types of cancer. And let's not forget, there is strong evidence linking gum disease and heart disease, a two-way relationship between oral health and diabetes and new research linking poor oral care to community and hospital-acquired pneumonia.

Scary, for sure, but before you rush back up to the bathroom for an extra brushing, help is at hand in the form of mouth maestro Rachel Lish!

Rachel is Training Programme Director and Clinical Lead for Oral Health Improvement for the North East and North Cumbria regions and it has become her mission to get their work out into the wider care sector workforce.

"I'd like to see Oral Health training as a mandatory stipulation that all staff have to undertake."



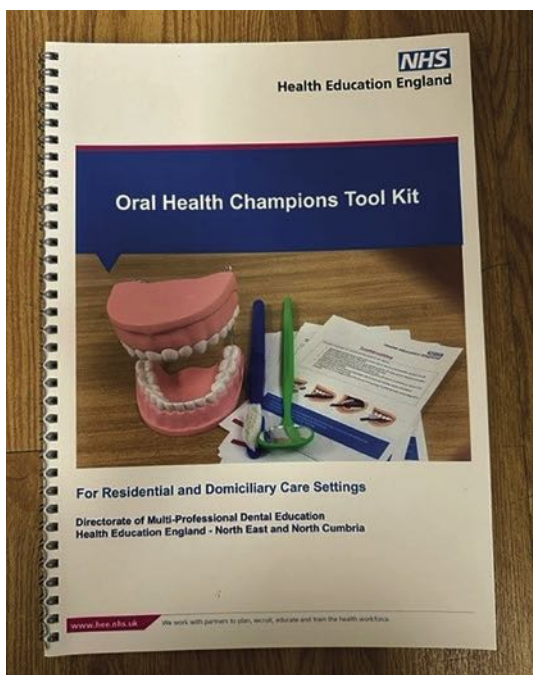
Finalists in the Great British Care Awards, Rachel explained a little of the work they've been doing to help within the field of Learning Disabilities which was described as 'phenomenal' by the Judges:

"During the pandemic, we were aware that people were having difficulties getting to see a dentist and a Learning Disabilities Nurse contacted us to say that there weren't enough resources out there for people with learning disabilities in relation to attending the dentist so we pulled together a working team of stakeholders that included the British Dental Association and the National Makaton Association (which is similar to sign language but using different symbols). We developed resources in Makaton and developed a video about a client called Gary who actually came to a dentist and we walked through a full examination using Makaton signage. From that we developed resources that have gone out to all dental practices to support people with learning disabilities in Makaton. Alongside the video and downloadable resources, we also developed prompt cards to be used around teeth brushing and we're also doing similar work around five dental procedures - filling, extraction, scale and polishing and x-ray, all in Makaton as well as hosting a suite of videos which will be launched at the National Learning Disabilities Conference in April this year."

And, this was all achieved in 12 weeks...in the pandemic!

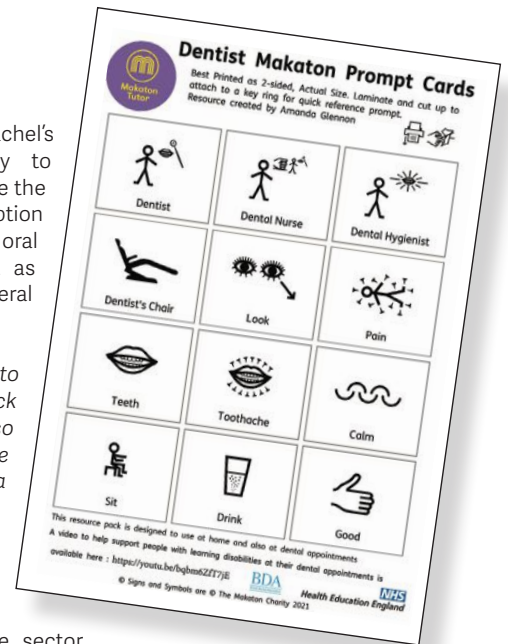
Rachel started training as a Dental Nurse in 1988 and worked chair side, supporting the dentist before moving into hospital settings to work with specialist patients. It was then when she did further qualifications in Oral Health that she gained a deep interest in the public health side of things, especially oral intervention and prevention. An Education Degree propelled her further into the design/delivery/evaluation world regarding training.

"I got a lot more job satisfaction working with special needs patients in hospital because it wasn't just about coming in for a filling, but more that I was able to support them through a journey, often around anxiety management - actually seeing those individuals regularly enough that they would consider undertaking treatment."



Indefatigable, Rachel's passion is clearly to dramatically change the long-held perception that somehow oral health is just not as important as general health:

"Yes, our aim is to put the mouth back into the body, so that when you're thinking about a general check up for a person, that it includes an oral assessment, too!"



Upskilling the care sector workforce is therefore vital. Rachel and her team cover a huge range of different programmes including: setting up policy in residential settings with the right paperwork to fill out when oral health assessments are being completed; the Champions Programme where care homes are asked to nominate a Champion in this area; training to look at national guidance and CQC recommendations; assessments and care plans; hands on training in mouth care; cleaning and denture care; barriers to good oral health and resistance around challenges. To go alongside this, the team have developed a toolkit and there's even a 10 module E-learning programme which staff can work on to suit their own busy schedules.

"We developed resources that have gone out to all dental practices to support people with learning disabilities in Makaton."

So, what's the long term aim?

"Well, I'd like to see Oral Health training as a mandatory stipulation that all staff have to undertake wherever they're working! There has to be more of an awareness around oral health. One of our aims is to get it embedded into other areas, for example, the care certificate within hospitals for healthcare assistants. Basically I want to get it into all settings for health and social care."

Phenomenal - yes. And I don't doubt it will happen because, and if you'll pardon the pun, Rachel and her team clearly have the teeth to make it happen.



Debra Mehta



“My mind immediately goes to the imbalance of power between leaders and the people accessing services.”

Keymn Whervin
Co-Production Manager
National Voices



WHAT KEEPS ME



AWAKE AT NIGHT

Keymn Whervin

Co-Production Manager, National Voices

I'm Keymn Whervin, Co-Production Manager at National Voices. My own personal lived experience is 23 years of caring for my mother Elsie.

National Voices is the leading coalition of health and social care charities in England. We have over 200 members covering a diverse range of conditions and communities, connecting us with the experiences of millions of people. In 2021, myself and my colleague Rachel Matthews co-designed Voices for Improvement, a diverse lived experience community.

Another of my roles is as the Lived Experience Facilitator for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's personalised care strategic co production group, My Life Choices. I am also the Lived Experience Co-Chair for the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' regional co production group.

When I reflect on the question, "What keeps you awake at night?" my mind immediately goes to the imbalance of **power** between leaders in social care and health and the people accessing these services. I also worry about the increase in accounts of racism I hear of in the sector. It saddens me that people accessing services and the workforce itself both feel as if they do not have the power or confidence to speak up.

People are also noticing the quality of support they receive seems to have taken a back foot, with the pandemic often given as the reason for this. I strongly believe that hearing from people who are the experts of their own care should be a priority, so leaders can better understand their perspectives.

"I am humbled by those with lived experience who work in partnership to address health inequalities and racism."

My lived experience has defined my path. People with lived experience may come from different walks of life but we have one thing in common; we are entrepreneurs, able to find fresh solutions and ideas to improve the system and consequently, people's lives. For example, I don't know many black people with an understanding of personal health budgets or personal budgets, why is this? Communities like mine are not made aware of these options. Examples are not promoted, personalised care not explained, Information is **power!**

"Through the programme, people with lived experience are coaching system leaders."

If it wasn't for the social care movement of 'Making It Real' I would still be in the dark about what communities can achieve once they have control. It is vital that those with disabilities, unpaid carers and people from ethnic minorities get a platform and a seat at the table.

My time at National Voices has seen me go from being an unpaid carer to an advisory group member, an associate and now an employee. Great things are also happening in health and social care spaces and the workforce needs to be recognised for the hard work they're doing to get it right for people. It is encouraging to see roles and opportunities for people with lived experience being advertised, but it is crucial that these roles also enable a person to develop their own knowledge, skills, and confidence as a leader.

I have found the freedom to say what needs to be said from a personal and external perspective, and this in turn has enabled me to design and develop the lived experience coaching and mentoring programme (Voices for Improvement) where power is turned on its head and shared with those with lived experience. Through the programme, people with lived experience are coaching system leaders; sharing how they've successfully navigated the system and overcome challenges. A shared and learned process.

I am humbled by both health and care system leaders and those with lived experience who have taken a leap of faith to work in partnership and try something different to address health inequalities and racism. We can only do this together by supporting those in most need first.

For more information about Voices for Improvement, visit <https://nationalvoices.org.uk/our-work/Voicesforimprovement>



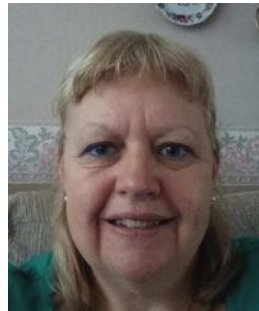
ASK THE EXPERTS

“What motivates you to care?”

Social care is currently facing a staffing crisis. An absence of long-term workforce planning, low pay, lack of recognition and work pressures, coupled with the fallout from Brexit and Covid, have resulted in the highest vacancy rates since records began.

In light of this, we asked staff members representing different roles at Signature Senior Lifestyle the question: “What motivates you to continue to care?”

“Helping residents and seeing the impact of the care you provide is a very powerful part of the role.”



Signature

Lisa Pickett
Team Member
Signature at Camberley

The Frontline Worker

“My first job after school was working in a care home, and I am proud to say I am still in the same role 36 years later! Helping residents and seeing the impact of the care you provide to them is a very powerful part of the role. They inspire me and make me passionate about my work. They provide countless memories and cherished moments. The stories residents share are remarkable. I remember one resident in particular whose story stood out. She was 105 and had travelled to America. She wrote a book all about her life and nursing journey as she too had worked in the care industry. Her book was so successful that she went on to The Terry Wogan Show to talk about it. I was truly inspired by this woman and her life, and it shows the connections you make by working in care.”

Signature

Tamara Jukes
Activities Coordinator
Signature at Banstead



“Being unafraid to embrace and introduce new cultures and creativity keeps me motivated.”

The Activities Coordinator

“The high levels of staff and service user engagement is the key in having their voices heard through meaningful consultations, surveys, performance management, meetings for collaboration and problem-solving. This ensures a clear feedback loop so that everybody understands how their views have informed planning and service delivery. Our focus and approach are strengths-based to support an individual’s independence, resilience and ability to make choices in a way that allows the person to lead and be in control of an ordinary and independent day-to-day life. We work in collaboration with service users supporting them to do things for themselves, with the aim that they become independent and more than just passive recipients of care and support. We consider it fundamental that we establish and acknowledge the capacity, skills, knowledge, network and potential of both the individual and the local community through robust supported self-assessment.”

Signature

Stuart Keown

Regional Development Chef
Signature Senior Lifestyle



“Helping the next generation of talent to see the responsibility chefs have in care is incredibly motivating.”

The Chef

“The link between healthy, balanced and nutritious food and bettering residents’ care outcomes has long been recognised. Delivering it day-in, day-out to residents is the challenge that inspired me to start a catering career in care more than 16 years ago. As care home environments evolve their food and beverage offerings, chefs now have an opportunity to build their own careers in care. A step outside of a restaurant into a care home’s own dining facilities is far from a step down. If you have the motivation to learn, grow and adapt what you cook to meet the needs of care home residents, then a career in care powerfully meets your ambitions. Providing that added value to residents for memorable, fine dining experiences is firmly possible within care. Helping the next generation of kitchen talent to see the responsibility chefs have in care is incredibly motivating.”

“Everyone living in a care setting deserves a voice and a sense of dignity.”



Signature

Sonya Fenwick

General Manager
Signature at Coombe Hill Manor

The General Manager

“Growing up in a family of three nurses it was only natural for me to follow in my family’s footsteps. I worked in several countries and nursing homes throughout my career. I completed my nursing studies in South Africa, I did further studies in Dementia at Kingston University and also gained my Mentorship qualifications at City University. I am motivated by my passion for maintaining high standards in residential care. This has always been the case and has carried on since joining Signature Coombe Hill Manor, first as a Care Services Manager, and later as General Manager. Everyone living in a care setting deserves a voice and a sense of dignity. Our role is to support residents in achieving this. Working with residents to make memories is a powerful, enabling process, achieved by always asking “What else can we do?”, “How may I help?”

Signature

Kay Cox

Chief Operating Officer
Signature Senior Lifestyle



“Cultivating personal relationships with everybody that forms part of a care home is immensely rewarding.”

The COO

“After nearly a decade of working in social care, my motivation to support residents, relatives, their loved ones and our talented colleagues burns as brightly as ever. Being involved in care makes you feel as though you are part of something very special. You are part of an extended family working in a supportive, caring and nurturing environment. Seeing the positive impact a thriving care home can have on the community it serves is exceptionally powerful. Cultivating personal relationships with everybody that forms part of a care home’s very being is immensely rewarding and is ultimately the key to making a positive difference. You are enabling residents to live a life with purpose in the home they have chosen to make with you. Throughout it all, you join talented colleagues in an exciting journey as you develop a lasting career in social care. What could be more motivating than that?”



CO-PRODUCTION COUNTS!

A move to independence through co-production



Jackie Taylor
Senior Development Officer
Changing Our Lives

When people think of co-production, they often think of getting disabled people together in groups to co-produce something new or improve a service.

In Changing Our Lives co-production is at the heart of all our work. The example we would like to share with you is an example where we weave co-production through our work with individuals to move them out of inpatient units into their own homes. Fundamentally, co-production is about relationships, understanding that we all have assets which when mobilised can create desired change and recognising that people are at their best when they are active participants in their own lives.

This is illustrated perfectly in our work with B. B had been in and out of hospitals for over twenty years, and was in long term segregation when Changing Our Lives got involved. Our first priority was relationship building. In practice, this meant spending time with B getting to know them as a person, rather than purely a list of labels, diagnoses and problem behaviours, and fostering a positive connection with them. Getting out of inpatient units is rarely quick or straightforward so an important part of the relationship was to be someone who consistently reflected the belief that they can and will move out of hospital.

“After half a lifetime spent in institutions, B has now moved in to their own home.”

We also spent time talking to the people in B's life and forging alliances with key players: those who were clear and active allies to B and those with influence and power to make change happen. Further down the line, we worked closely with the identified provider, ensuring that the transition was planned with B's needs at the centre. A key part of this was facilitating a training day for the new staff team with B's social worker, previous hospital advocate and B's Mum.

“People are at their best when they are active participants in their own lives.”

Part and parcel of working in co-production is being ready to be flexible, creative and responsive to what is in front of you. Working with B often meant picking up a range of tasks to make sure that they moved closer to, and eventually out of hospital. That could mean anything from coordinating visits for B to see their new home and the local area to creating social stories to support B to understand the journey out of hospital.

Having acquired the “complex” label, B was someone who generated a lot of meetings, none of which they were part of in any way. In contrast, we create a space for the person to be an active part of planning their own life by using person centred planning approaches. For B, this meant facilitating small informal workshops, where B was in control: deciding who to invite, what to talk about and the pace of the conversations. This often meant flitting between talking about B's life and future to watching snippets of favourite police dramas or song. This worked for B, who chose to stay for 2 - 3 hours each time, unheard of at any other meeting. A wealth of information was generated which was used to develop a person centred plan in written and film format.

After many twists and turns and half a lifetime spent in institutions, B has now moved in to their own home with their own staff team and is beginning to live the ordinary life we are all entitled to.



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Care Talk has a packed agenda of events ahead.
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The National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards

Northern Ireland - 9th March 2023

Hilton, Belfast

England & Scotland - 30th June 2023

The ICC, Birmingham

The Housing With Care Awards

9th June 2023 Marriott Regents Park, London

Social Care Top 30 Awards

12th October 2023 Hilton Bankside, London

The National Children & Young People Awards

27th October 2023 The ICC, Birmingham

Great British Care Awards Regionals

Yorkshire & Humberside - 2nd November 2023

The Royal Armouries, Leeds

East of England - 3rd November 2023

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West Midlands - 4th November 2023

The ICC, Birmingham

Scotland - 8th November 2023

Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow

North East - 9th November 2023

The Grand Gosforth Hotel, Newcastle

North West - 11th November 2023

Kimpton Clocktower Hotel, Manchester

Wales - 16th November 2023

The Marriott Hotel, Cardiff

South East - 17th November 2023

Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton

London - 18th November 2023

Hilton Bankside, London

South West - 23rd November 2023

Aston Gate, Bristol

East Midlands - 24th November 2023

East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham

Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards

21st November 2023 The Marriott Grosvenor Square Hotel, London

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

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“What are the barriers to increasing supply and how we can we ensure everyone who needs a safe home in the community gets one?”

This was just one of the themes explored by a panel of experts at a networking lunch, held at London's iconic One Great George Street, on 20th February.

The event, a precursor to The Housing With Care Awards, saw sector leaders and influencers representing all areas of Housing with Care, come together to meet like-minded professionals to explore the challenges and opportunities for housing with care models.

The Housing with Care Awards, supported by Civitas, aim to recognise and celebrate excellence in accommodation and services for integrated retirement communities, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems, assisted living, extra care housing and supported living and shared lives schemes.

The awards take place on 9th June at The Marriott Regents Park Hotel, London



L-R: **Rebekah Luff**, Senior Research Analyst, Social Care Institute for Excellence, **Michael Voges**, Chief Executive, ARCO, **Jeremy Porteus**, CEO, The Housing, Learning and Improvement Network, **Paul Bridge**, CEO, Social Housing, Civitas, **Sarah Clarke-Kuehn**, COO, Sanctuary Group, **Prof Martin Green**, CEO, Care England



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LEADING THE WAY IN SOCIAL CARE

Mairead Liston

Registered Manager, Cavendish Homecare

I have always strived for the highest quality of care for all. This is especially relevant for those being discharged into the community. Throughout my forty years in social care, my vision has always been for person centred care. Cavendish Homecare has offered bespoke care solutions for the last twelve years and we have faced many challenges during this time.

After qualifying as a nurse in 1979, I also worked within midwifery and intensive care, - gaining invaluable experience that enables me to understand the varying needs of clients and their families. This is essential especially for those with complex needs e.g. paediatrics, ventilated etc. as well as any approaching later life.

Prior to starting Cavendish Homecare, I managed (via another agency) NHS staff vacancies and contracts across all specialities throughout the UK - this gave me a unique insight into how difficult and unsustainable this model was.

Cavendish Homecare was set up to match the right staff to client's needs, enabling greater independence, reduce hospitalisation and promote wellbeing. Cavendish Homecare offers outstanding care in your own home and my leadership style has evolved as follows:

- **Interviewing all staff personally**
- **Intimate understanding of client needs and staff abilities**
- **Staff and client selection based on their preferences**
- **A hands-on approach to all staff and clients**
- **Nurturing my team to be their best**
- **Focusing on team building to build on strengths and support weaknesses**
- **Innovation and upskilling**

The social care sector is in crisis, with inadequate funding, staff shortages and burnout. Social care has long been neglected resulting in this current situation. Despite great leaders in social care, without radical change, people will continue to be unable to access the care they need.

We offer staff satisfaction in their roles, plus competitive pay rates than most other services – however, financial remuneration is only part of why staff continue working

in my organisation – it's our family values, fairness and continual support that what attracts and retains staff – with many new recruits being referrals from existing staff.

I have a responsibility to lead my staff in education and I remain passionate that new ideas keep staff motivated and up to date with nursing best practices – innovation must be encouraged and implemented.



Cavendish Homecare Professionals

We cannot stand still as a service – we must respond to changing nursing needs in social care. We have witnessed a shift for those receiving palliative and end of life care – everyone now prefers holistic care within their own home environment.

Therefore we have embraced projects that focus on this – we fully support “John’s Campaign” for those living with dementia, which respects family involvement, plus we have piloted the new international “Lantern Model” of nursing care with St. Christopher’s hospice.

Currently we are collaborating with co-founders Professor Heather Richardson and Marie Cooper to continue to promote this service with our nursing and care staff.

“I remain passionate that new ideas keep staff motivated and up to date with best practices.”

In 2021, our management team were awarded the “Cavell Star” for excellence in homecare services. During 2022, I received the Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care Silver award and we were national finalists for a number of care related awards that highlight our reputation of being trust worthy and reliable.

I will continue recruiting and retaining high quality staff - the service we provide to staff is equally as important as the service we provide to our clients.

By supporting our nurses and carers to deliver outstanding care, they remain valued and happy in their work. Staff well-being and commitment to evolving services is even more essential in 2023 as we continue to build a successful future together!

Calling all senior leaders of excellence to social care!

Care Talk is delighted to host the **2023 Social Care Leadership Awards**.

These unique awards will recognise, celebrate and promote great leadership in the Social Care Sector, over and above Registered Manager level and share knowledge and expertise in leadership.

We are looking for nominations for senior leaders in social care who have demonstrated strong, innovative leadership to ensure a quality outcomes that make a real difference to care delivery.

AWARDS CATEGORIES:

the lifetime achievement award
the executive award
learning disabilities & autism award
the workforce development leader award
the quality assurance leader award
the care home leader award
the clinical nurse manager award
the home care leader award
executive children and young people leader award

Finalists join top leaders and decision makers in social care!

Finalists and guests will be invited to the esteemed **Social Care Top 30** Gala Dinner, a bespoke event that celebrates leadership from care providers and other key influencers in the sector. The event will take place on 12th October 2023 at the Hilton Bankside, London where the category winners will be announced along side winners of the **Social Care Top 30**.

Nominate online at: www.caretalk-business.co.uk/scps
Closing date for nominations 31st July 2023



Helen Davies-Parsons
CEO
Dormy Care Communities





LEADING THE WAY IN SOCIAL CARE

Helen Davies-Parsons

CEO, Dormy Care Communities

A registered nurse for more than 35 years and with 28 years' experience in senior roles in the independent care sector.

“The understanding that comes with being a woman will be shared by the majority of the workforce.”

Working in social care is so rewarding. It can also be very challenging - something which we particularly saw during the pandemic. It is a privilege to care for people in their later years and it is also a great responsibility. It's vital that we get it right, for both the people who choose us to care for them, and their loved ones.

That's why I believe that in this sector particularly, it's essential to lead teams from the front whilst working collaboratively with them, respecting their lives and need for balance outside of work as well as supporting people to develop and grow in their careers.

Across Dormy Care Communities' homes, our team of colleagues is around 95% female and women also make up the majority of our senior team. As well as myself as CEO, there are eight other women in senior positions and four men. It is a 'split' which is representative of the overall workforce and it's important that with such a predominantly female team, it is right they have women in leadership and management roles.

Additionally, with so many organisations in our sector finding it difficult to recruit staff, and with so many of the existing and potential workforce being female, having women in senior roles in care companies is even more essential. It demonstrates that women are valued, that they are respected and that their ambitions and aspirations to grow and develop will be supported and nurtured.

Having women at the highest level in care organisations acting as career role models is key. But so is simply having people with the lived experience and understanding that comes with being a woman and will be shared by the majority of the workforce- whether that is of the challenges of motherhood or menopause.

During the pandemic, many people in our teams sacrificed time with their own families to make sure those we care for had everything they needed. Those were exceptional circumstances, and it was support that was greatly appreciated by the people who live in our homes and their families.

However, on a day-to-day basis we're very focused on helping people maintain a healthy and positive work/life balance – it's something we recognise and respect. We also strive to make sure that we are as family friendly as we possibly can be. As many of the senior team have worked in direct care roles, and juggled with family responsibilities, it helps bring a unique insight and understanding.

When I founded Dormy Care Communities, I wanted to take all of my nursing and social care experience and create the best possible environments for the people we care for and also for colleagues. Whilst I'm certainly not afraid to take bold steps, from the 'business' perspective it felt like I was a woman stepping into a man's world. But I was lucky to have supportive people all around me, and a great team acting as my wing-women and wingmen. I have learned so much from all of them.

From a leadership point of view, I think empowerment and respect are two of the most important elements. While I may be the CEO, the team is empowered at every level and we all work collaboratively together. I also would never ask any member of the team to do anything I wouldn't do myself. I may wear two hats now – one business and one nursing – but the nursing hat is the one that never comes off. I remain on the NMC register and happily work shifts in the homes when the need arises.

Everyone at Dormy – female and male - have their own skills and complement one another as a team. They are passionate, enthusiastic and committed. What we seek to do at every level, to help us nurture the next generation of excellent care leaders, is to offer the highest standards of training with a career pathway that has no boundaries, no matter your gender.

With so many women in leadership positions, we hope to inspire and show the next generation of female leaders that anything is possible and to believe in ourselves to achieve whatever we want to achieve.

“We're very focused on helping people maintain a healthy and positive work/life balance ”

Founded in 2015, Dormy Care Communities operates four high-quality care homes in England and Wales where the focus is on providing the highest standards of support in the very best environments.

Ensuring our sector's registered managers are supported



Natalie Scarimbolo
Project Manager
Skills for Care

Natalie Scarimbolo, Project Manager at Skills for Care discusses why supporting our sector's registered managers has never been more important.

The role and responsibilities of registered managers is incredibly vast and critical - they are some of the most skilled and committed professionals in our sector and frequently demonstrate a breath-taking balance of technical and legislative knowledge, problem-solving, compassion and empathy, all while providing the best care for the people they support and their workforce.

In 2021/22 there were around 23,500 registered managers in post in the adult social care sector with 78% having been in the sector for 10 years or more.

It is estimated that 7,500 registered managers (32%) are due to retire in the next 15 years. The vacancy and turnover rate of registered managers is high, so we need to think about how we identify and support the managers of the future; succession planning is key to ensuring that services continue to provide well-led, consistent quality care.

At Skills for Care, we are constantly working to ensure that registered managers receive the praise and professional recognition they deserve through various initiatives, including our membership offer. Through membership, we support managers to develop best practice and knowledge, keep up-to-date with sector developments and share ideas with like-minded peers.

“Digital learning for managers modules which have been developed for our future managers.”

Did you know Skills for Care supports over 145 local networks across England? We know that registered managers often feel isolated in their role, and other registered managers are one of the best sources of support, which is why we set up the local networks. The networks are a safe space for managers to come together and connect with peers in their local area, offering support and guidance and a place to discuss challenges and opportunities.

“At the heart of every outstanding service is a manager.”

A registered manager told us recently after attending their local network that it is ‘a safe place to network with other managers who share compassion and determination to get through the most challenging of times, an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings whilst supporting each other with constantly changing guidance.’

We also understand the key role that deputy managers provide. Deputies are the managers of the future and supporting them in their role is crucial to the stability and continuity of services. Skills for Care supports a series of regional deputy manager networks to provide deputies, team leaders and aspiring leaders a place to connect and learn with others.

With succession planning in mind, Skills for Care has designed ‘Digital learning for managers’ modules which have been developed for our future managers. It is vital to provide this opportunity for new and aspiring managers to develop and progress their career, and it can also help employers retain their staff.

At the heart of every outstanding service is a manager who's working hard to ensure that they can create a person-centred culture that delivers great, high-quality care – and their staff are supported, recognised and valued. It is so important that we ensure that our registered managers are supported and have the resources that they need to help them in their role.

Find out more about the support available to registered managers at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/registeredmanagers

Registered manager membership



Join our growing community of registered managers

Are you a registered manager of an adult social care service? Join us and keep up-to-date with sector developments, share ideas and best practice with like-minded peers and access benefits that enhance your learning, development and wellbeing.

Skills for Care is the membership organisation for registered managers in England. Our members are raising the profile of your profession that sits at the heart of our sector – championing the values for delivering compassionate, person-centred care.

Membership benefits include:

- printed copy of our Social care manager's handbook – the go-to resource for registered managers
 - dedicated monthly newsletter full of relevant information for your role
 - exclusive resource when you renew your membership
 - the chance to train to become a mentor or receive mentoring
 - access to further guidance and resources
- ...plus much more!



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Skills for Care prepares social care providers for new CQC inspection focus



With changes to Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection focus anticipated this year, Skills for Care is preparing to launch a new version of their popular 'Good and Outstanding (GO) online: Inspection toolkit'. They share more about the resource and the upcoming CQC changes.

Whilst the CQC have delayed introducing their single assessment framework until "late 2023", regulated adult social care providers are keen to know what they should do to help them to prepare.

Skills for Care's updated free resource will provide practical information, advice and resources to help you meet the new CQC quality statements, which will be introduced as a part of their new framework.

We know it can take time for providers to prepare for CQC inspection particularly with these new changes in place, which is why we're releasing this new version of our 'Good and Outstanding online: Inspection toolkit' early to give you the time to plan and implement changes.

What's changing with CQC inspections?

The single assessment framework is an evolution of the CQC inspection process. This will involve some light changes and a streamlined approach to how CQC will monitor and inspect services, including what evidence they'll be looking for.

Inspections will still focus around CQC's five key questions covering Safe, Effective, Caring, Responsive and Well-led, but the key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) will be replaced with new quality statements.

Across the five key questions, there will be 34 quality statements which every regulated service should be able to demonstrate. Each quality statement will be scored by CQC, and these will determine the overall rating of each key question and ultimately the overall rating of the service. The rating system of Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement, and Inadequate will still be in place.

Since the announcement of this new framework, providers have been asking us about the below areas of inspection focus:

- **Assessing needs**
- **Equity of access**
- **Equity of experiences and outcomes**
- **Environmental sustainability**
- **Freedom to speak up**
- **Monitoring and improving outcomes**
- **Planning for the future**
- **Workforce equality, diversity, and inclusion**
- **Workforce wellbeing and enablement**

These aren't all completely new areas of interest, but a lot of regulated providers will need to review and consider what they're currently doing in these areas and be ready to evidence this from late 2023 when inspection changes are introduced.

Good and Outstanding (GO) online: Inspection toolkit (single assessment framework version)

Our updated online resource aims to help providers with this and is set to launch on 28 March 2023. This will include:

- **new films** - providing introductions to each of the quality statements, helping you understand what inspectors will be looking for
- **new recommendations** - informed by good and best practice, enabling you to consider what may need to be evidenced to meet or exceed CQC expectations
- **new practical examples** - showing what other providers are already doing around each of the quality statements
- **new resources** - a wider range of support from Skills for Care and others related to each area of inspection.

In addition to the new 'Good and Outstanding (GO) online: Inspection toolkit', we'll be updating our other resources over the coming months. We'll continue to update our CQC related seminars which bring managers and team members together to discuss inspection and service improvement.

Once the CQC have formally introduced the single assessment framework and replaced the earlier inspection model, we'll also publish a new edition of our 'Good and outstanding care guide' providing further practical insight and activities for you to adopt in preparing for the CQC.

To access our latest information and advice visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/go

Managing risk in the care staffing crisis



forbessolicitors.

Amy Stokes
Partner
Forbes Solicitors

Amy Stokes, a partner at Forbes Solicitors, explores the key factors resulting from such a lack of resource and how care leaders can manage risk when navigating the issue.

In recent years, the number of vacancies in the adult social care sector has increased dramatically. In October 2022, Skills for Care revealed that the number of vacant posts had increased by 1.79 million in 2021/22. Crucially, it also found that fewer positions had been filled and vacancies were increasing year-on-year. Care sector trade organisations have warned that such shortages have affected, and will continue to affect, care recipients. In its workforce report from June 2022, the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee reported that an additional 490,000 jobs would be needed in social care by the early part of the 2030s.

“The sector is caught in a vicious cycle of mass resignations leading to increased pressures for remaining staff.”

What has led to the social care staffing crisis?

A number of factors have created a perfect storm when it comes to staffing within the care sector. Net migration of EU nationals in the year to June 2022 was negative 51,000, a decrease of 63,000 people compared with year-end June 2021, when it was positive 12,000. This demonstrates the real impact of the end of Free Movement between the UK and the EU, coupled with Covid lockdowns, which saw a large number of EU nationals return to their country of origin and have now missed the deadline for applying to the EU settlement scheme to secure their status. Lower comparable pay to other sectors, averaging £10.88 per hour, and workforce pressures are also taking their toll. In its inquiry on the health and social care workforce in July 2022, the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee reported that the NHS had lost two million full-time equivalent days to sickness in August 2021. These included more than 560,000 days to anxiety, stress, depression, or another psychiatric illness.

A recent survey of NHS Trusts found that staff were struggling to afford to get to work, with 71% of trust managers describing this as having a “significant or severe impact” on resource. Faced with a cost-of-living crisis, many care employees are also leaving the sector for better paid jobs in other industries, such as hospitality or retail, and attrition rates are now at just 35%.

Why is retention such an issue?

Care is a risky, hands-on job that can be emotionally taxing in exchange for relatively low pay and unsociable hours. Of course, it can also be extremely rewarding, but a growing number of employees are seeking more flexibility. The sector is caught in a vicious cycle of mass resignations leading to increased workloads, hours, and pressures for remaining staff, which fuels poor retention.

Are agency workers the answer?

In short, no. Despite the growing reliance on agency workers – research by Care England found almost eight in 10 providers were using more, or significantly more, agency staff in 2022 – there are significant risks linked to agency staff.

Care providers have no control over the training they have received, which has been reported as being inadequate in some cases. The cost of agency workers also carries higher fees than if staff are recruited permanently, and there’s issues where agencies are sponsoring migrant workers (under the skilled worker route) and placing them into care homes – this is not permitted under immigration rules and therefore classed as illegal work.

What other options do care providers have?

Care home leaders must consider their recruitment strategy carefully to maximise resource and minimise risk. With recruitment costs on the up, it’s worth considering other ways to source talent – perhaps through social media and linking up with trade organisations. Overseas recruitment and obtaining a sponsor licence to take advantage of the Health and Care Worker visa is another option. Retention is vital, so providers should regularly review the benefits they offer, as well as working hard to foster a positive workplace culture – this will also help attract future employees. In order to provide the vulnerable in society with the quality of care they deserve, as well as protect the sector’s employees, the time for change is now.

care@forbessolicitors.co.uk

For more information about comprehensive legal expertise that helps care for your organisation, visit the Forbes Solicitors team at UK Care Week 2023. Stand G84, UK Care Week, 22nd – 23rd March 2023, NEC, Birmingham. Or email: care@forbessolicitors.co.uk

CQC's New Inspection Methodology – Where we are and what to expect in 2023



RIDOUTS
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Samantha Burges
Senior Associate Solicitor
Ridouts Professional Services Ltd

Throughout 2022 the CQC was ploughing ahead with the development of its new single assessment framework with a view to implementing it in Spring 2023. However, in December it was announced that this would be delayed and instead the CQC would be focusing on implementing its new approach in phases. It was confirmed the CQC would gradually start using its new assessment framework 'towards the end of 2023'.

What we know so far about the new assessment framework

The new single assessment framework will apply to all registered Providers. While the ratings and 5 key questions remain the same, the CQC is scrapping the KLOEs and prompts in favour of newly developed 'quality statements'. These are described as commitments that Providers should live up to and are expressed as 'we statements'. Six evidence categories have been developed that will be used to organise information under the statements. This is supported by a 6-stage scoring system that will be applied to the evidence collected to ultimately produce key question and overall ratings for a Provider. It is understood that initially the scoring will happen behind the scenes, but in time the CQC intends to publish exact scores.

"A huge part of the new framework focuses on remote evidence collecting activities."

One of the key changes is the move away from inspection based activity being the primary driver for assessment and ratings changes. The CQC aims to form quicker, real-time judgements of services without having to rely on inspections. Instead there will be an increased reliance on remote data collection and inspections will continue to be risk-based. Most importantly, under the new methodology, ratings will be able to change without an inspection visit.

There has been no clarity to date on what processes will be in place to enable Providers to challenge ratings. Traditionally the factual accuracy process has existed to allow Providers to challenge findings from physical inspections prior to publication of an inspection report. The CQC has said Providers will have the opportunity to respond to its findings under the new methodology but no further information has been forthcoming. In particular, how will Providers be able to respond to updated ratings that are not based on a physical inspection?

It is also unclear how the evidence categories will be applied in practice. Information published to date suggests the CQC will use its discretion as to which evidence categories it looks at when assessing a Provider – they may not always look at them all. Will the CQC work collaboratively with Providers in determining the relevant evidence? In addition, the majority of published evidence categories rely on the opinions of individuals - what mechanisms will be in place for objectively assessing subjective opinions?

What to expect in 2023

Dates are very vague and no comprehensive timetable has been provided to date. However, we do know that the following key steps have been set out.

During Spring 2023 the CQC will be focusing on internal priorities including making sure appropriate technology is in place and that it can be tested with Providers. The CQC states it has taken into account the reality that many services are currently under pressure and this shift in focus will minimise the changes it makes externally, therefore reducing the potential burden on Providers for now.

In Summer 2023 the CQC will start a staged launch of its new online Provider Portal. The first stage will allow Providers to submit statutory notifications and the CQC will be looking to improve how its enforcement process works. This marks the start of the CQC gathering evidence in a new and structured way which is intended to help inform its assessments. The intention is to make it much easier for Providers to interact with the CQC. The new portal will be the only way the CQC will communicate electronically with Providers in the future. Providers will need to familiarise themselves with these technological changes when more information is forthcoming.

The CQC says it will be releasing more details on its phased roll-out 'early in the New Year', along with more user research and testing. Providers should keep up to date with the latest developments and involve themselves as much as possible in the CQC's Provider engagement processes to ensure they have a say on how they will be inspected and judged in the future.

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***“In Summer 2023
the CQC will start a staged
launch of its new online
Provider Portal.”***





This month,
Kirsty meets...

Morten Mathiesen

Chief Marketing Officer
at Sekoia



Each month I meet key stakeholders and business leaders in the social care sector. This month I met Morten Mathiesen, Chief Marketing Office, Sekoia. I caught up with Morten to discuss Sekoia's start up story, their introduction to the UK care sector, and commitment to championing social care.

Digital Care Planning forms the basis of Sekoia's operations. Why is digitisation important? How does the NHS Transformation Directorate roadmap help care providers with this transition?

Digital isn't important in itself, but I think that a lot of organisations find that what they're wanting to achieve has been very hard using pen and paper as their primary toolbox. Time is a luxury in the care business. Being able to generate more time on the hands of people working here is not only a well-proven business case, but a massive case for quality of life for everyone involved.

The NHS Transformation Directorate has set out a significant vision and complimentary roadmap for the digitalisation of social care. Creating an assured supplier list has helped remove some of the barriers that our sector has been dealing with. Even the more internal barriers are being confuted by a large programme for social care that's rubber-stamping the whole digital transformation.

It is clear then that Sekoia are committed to championing social care. Can you tell us how you have been and will continue to champion this cause?

Being a founding patron of Championing Social Care is very much in line with our company's vision and incentive to shine a light on the incredible value of the social care sector to society.

Care Home Open Week and Care Sector's Got Talent are two examples of events that are opening doors to our sector and helping us build a more just and positive image. Not only recruiting and retaining people, but making sure that the public knows what the country's largest workforce stand for: heart and skills in an unrivalled sector.

"The Danish model of care is based on a rehabilitative and holistic approach."

So Morten, tell us a little about Sekoia's start up story?

Originally, we were a group of people working on a digital "Jamie Oliver" app for schools to improve their handling of kids' school meals. That didn't pan out at all! At the same time, we'd come across some social care hubs and started shadowing care teams where everything pointed back to that same overwhelming workday: person-centred care being undermined by an admin burden. This then became our mission. To (re) enable care and support.

In what ways does both the business' and your own Danish roots inform Sekoia's approach to social care in the UK now?

The Danish model of care is based on a rehabilitative and holistic approach, set out to enable individual's reach and maintain their optimal physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, and social functional levels. The Welfare society to some extent bases itself on such a contract between all parts involved in securing outcomes for those in need of support

When building software within this space, it's quite clear to us that we've taken this 'contract' with us. We believe in supporting care teams delivering the best thinkable care by equipping them with a transparent and helpful user experience that produces good, informed decision-making.

"Being able to generate more time is a massive case for the quality of life for everyone involved."

Kirsty Hollins
Communications Executive, Care Talk

To find out more about Sekoia, visit <https://sekoia.co.uk/> and <https://championingsocialcare.org.uk/>.

Calling all suppliers of excellence to social care!

Care Talk Business is delighted to host the **2023 Social Care Premier Supplier Awards**.

These unique awards will recognise excellence in suppliers of products and service to the care sector, showcasing innovation, customer service and demonstrating outstanding client outcomes.

We are looking for nominations for key influencers from suppliers to social care who excel in quality products and services, that make a real difference to the end user.

AWARDS CATEGORIES:

legal services
public/transitional

banking
& investment

recruitment

property
agents

workforce
development

infection
control
products

technology
pr & marketing

consultancies

Finalists join top leaders and decision makers in social care!

Finalists and guests will be invited to the esteemed **Social Care Top 30** Gala Dinner, a bespoke event that celebrates leadership from care providers and other key influencers in the sector. The event will take place on 12th October 2023 at the Hilton Bankside, London where the category winners will be announced along side winners of the **Social Care Top 30**.

Nominate online at: www.caretalk.co.uk/scl
Closing date for nominations 31st July 2023

Care Talk

Business

Sharing business excellence in social care

Care Talk Business is a new and exciting Business2Business news resource aimed at key decision-makers within social care provision, which include care and nursing home operators, home care and day centres.



As a partner of established **Care Talk** magazine, **The Great British Care Awards**, **The Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards** and **The Children & Young People Awards**, we have access to customers that reach the **WHOLE** of the social care sector, giving you maximum exposure to key industry decision makers.

Our Audience Reach

Average monthly Twitter impressions
300K+

Average monthly visitor numbers
105K+

Social media followers
30K+

Great introductory rates for advertisers!
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