

Care Talk

The voice of excellence in social care

Let's Talk Social Care! Issue **135** | October **2024**

Putting People at the Centre of Social Care



In This Issue:



PUTTING PEOPLE IN CONTROL

Prof Martin Green
Chief Executive
Care England



CREATING GLORIOUSLY ORDINARY LIVES

Tricia Nicoll
Co-convenor
Social Care Future

THE NEW WAVE IN SOCIAL CARE RECRUITMENT

Joe Desmond
Managing Director
Recruit2Care



WHAT KEEPS ME AWAKE AT NIGHT

Ian Pritchard
Chief Executive
Alternative Futures Group



Care Talk

Business

Sharing business excellence in social care

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- A CULTURE OF CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN DRIVING UP QUALITY
- OUTSTANDING STAFF, AN OUTSTANDING SERVICE

Circulation List

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

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- Registered Manager
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- Care Staff
- Ancillary Staff
- Service Users
- Families

Welcome to the November issue of *Care Talk*.

Autumn has arrived, bringing shifts not just in nature but in the political landscape as well. Following the recent Labour conference, new messages regarding social care are emerging—whether they signal good news remains to be seen. One constant, however, is the critical need for **Putting People at the Centre of Social Care**.

In this October issue of *Care Talk*, we explore how prioritising the voices and experiences of individuals can reshape service delivery and improve lives. No matter the political changes ahead, prioritising people will always be key to delivering compassionate and effective support.

In this issue, we hear from Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, who highlights the vital role of listening, when it comes to putting people at the heart of social care. In her article, **Freedom to Speak Up**, (page 6), she emphasises the importance of creating safe spaces for open dialogue within the sector. By fostering transparency and accountability, she shows how truly listening to people's voices can lead to more compassionate, individualised care and support.

Building on the theme of inclusivity, Tricia Nicoll, co-convenor of Social Care Future, shares her thoughts in **Creating Gloriously Ordinary Lives**. In her article, (page 13), Tricia explores how people, places, and resources combine to provide great support, urging us to rethink traditional care models and embrace a more inclusive approach.

Echoing these sentiments, Paula Braynion, Managing Director at Future Directions CIC, shares her insights on the emerging trends and strategies that are shaping the future of person-centred care. In her article, **Shaping the Future of Person-Centred Care and Support** (page 8), Paula highlights the need to move beyond one-size-fits-all services, emphasising how personalised care empowers individuals by focusing on their unique needs, aspirations, and dreams.

Lastly, don't miss this month's *Real Lives* features (pages 28 to 31). These stories from award-winning care and support workers showcase how putting people at the centre of social care, combined with dedication and creativity, truly transforms lives.

So, as we embrace the changing season, let's renew our commitment to keeping people at the heart of care and support. Grab a cuppa, have a flick through, and be reminded of how truly transformative it is when people are placed at the centre of social care!

Till next time,
Lisa

 @lisa_caretalk



Putting people at the centre of social care

Professor Martin Green, Chief Executive of Care England, shares his personal insights on the vital importance of placing individuals who use services at the core of social care.

Putting people who use services at the heart of care has numerous benefits for the individuals receiving care and the overall care system. By involving those who receive the care, you can be assured that the services meet people's needs, and involvement in decision-making leads to better outcomes and more effective use of the resources. There is a major challenge for the care system because we have increasing needs and shrinking resources. If we start engaging with people who use services, we can ensure that their needs and preferences are understood and met effectively. This approach leads to improved outcomes, increased satisfaction, better quality of life, and a more effective use of the available resources.

Additionally, involving service users in planning and delivering care can help empower them and promote self-determination. This can lead to greater independence, autonomy, and confidence in managing their own lives and well-being. It can also foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to better adherence to treatment plans and improved outcomes. In the past, both health and social care services have suffered from a tendency to impose solutions on people, rather than coproduce a response to health or social care needs. It is also true to say that in many cases, costly solutions have been delivered that do not meet people's needs and are a waste of resources. One of the biggest challenges we face in the current system is that we are very risk averse, and the system takes on the responsibility of ironing out risk rather than informing people who use services what their options are and what might be the consequences of some of their actions. We all manage risk within our lives, and it is, in part, what enables us to live well. If you start ironing out all the risks, you are then leading a very unsatisfactory life.

Furthermore, involving service users in care decisions can help to identify gaps in services, spotlight areas for improvement, and develop innovative solutions to address specific needs. This can lead to more personalised and effective care interventions and more efficient use of resources within the system. One of the things that health and care systems seem incapable of understanding is that all the innovation and creativity that drives change and more effective use of resources tend to come from people who are using services. When you are living with a long-term condition, it is so real to you that you think very creatively about what you need to do to live a better life and have more control.



Professor Martin Green OBE
Chief Executive, Care England



Overall, putting people who use services at the heart of care is essential for delivering a 21st-century care system that improves outcomes and enhances the overall quality of people's lives. As we look at the demographics and we face a future where there will be more people in need and fewer resources, we cannot afford to provide people with things that do not make a difference to them. I would argue that in the future, putting people at the heart of care is not going to be nice; it will be essential if we are going to meet people's needs and manage resources.

“We cannot afford to provide people with things that do not make a difference to them.”

 @ProfMartinGreen @CareEngland
 careengland.org.uk

Freedom to speak up



Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark
National Guardian for the NHS

The National Guardian's Office and the role of Freedom to Speak Up Guardian were established following recommendations from Sir Robert Francis KC's 2015 report, "The Freedom to Speak Up." Here Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, outlines how listening puts people at the heart of social care.

Our people are the key to organisational success. The culture of an organisation has been shown to impact safety innovation, learning, performance and workforce well-being.

Listening to our people when they speak up is the cornerstone of putting people at the heart of social care. While there are many ways for people to speak up, sometimes they may be fearful that they might be victimised for speaking up or they have tried to raise matters before and been blocked or ignored. Their potential silence may put the people in our care at risk.

About Freedom to Speak Up guardians

Freedom to Speak Up guardians provide an additional channel for workers to speak up to when they feel they cannot do so in other ways, and work proactively to support a positive speaking up culture.

There are now over 1,200 Freedom to Speak Up guardians working throughout healthcare in England. My office leads, trains and supports this network of Freedom to Speak Up guardians and conducts Speak Up reviews to identify learning and support improvement of the speaking up culture of the healthcare sector. We also provide learning to the healthcare system as a whole, disseminating good practice and providing challenge to tackle barriers to speaking up.

"The interconnection of health and care means that Freedom to Speak Up should not be limited to only health providers."

Freedom to Speak Up in social care

In December 2021, the previous government decided not to take forward a previous commitment on Freedom to Speak Up in Adult Social Care. I was disappointed with the announcement, while understanding financial constraints, but I hope that Freedom to Speak Up guardians can be formally implemented in Adult Social Care in the future.

Informally, many organisations are seeking to provide their people with an impartial person to speak up to, if they are not able to through routes such as line managers and HR. Some Trusts in England have social care organisations within their groups who are supported by guardians, and Leeds Local Authority have implemented the guardian model with Freedom to Speak Up guardians trained using our resources.

Listening leaders

When people feel psychologically safe to speak up, they can help organisations learn and improve. Only by listening to understand can we take the action needed for speaking up to make a difference.

For this October's Speak Up Month, our theme is Listen Up and we will be focusing on the power of listening, and the important part which listening plays in encouraging people to feel confident to speak up. Confidence to speak up comes from knowing that if you speak up, you will be listened to and that appropriate action will be taken.

Care providers have an important role promoting a Speak Up, Listen Up, Follow Up culture in their organisations. A great culture attracts and retains the best workers. In a time when workforce shortages are so high, this is invaluable.

My vision for Freedom to Speak Up in social care

As the health and care sector becomes more integrated, it is vital that speaking up is available to all workers across the patient pathway.

The interconnected nature of the health and care sectors means that Freedom to Speak Up should not be limited to only health providers. An ambulance worker may have witnessed inappropriate behaviours in a care home; an allied health professional may want to share good practice ideas across different services they visit; a pharmacist may be concerned about fraudulent prescriptions in a resident's name.

Workers speak up because they want the best for the people in their care. My vision is that everyone, no matter where they work in health and care, has effective routes to speaking up, including access to a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. So that we might give our best to the people we care for.

 @NatGuardianFTSU
 nationalguardian.org.uk

“Freedom to Speak Up guardians provide an additional channel for workers to speak up.”



Shaping the future of person-centred care and support



future
directions
your decisions, your future.

Paula Braynion
Managing Director
Future Directions CIC

Paula Braynion, Managing Director at Community Interest Company Future Directions CIC, shares her thoughts on emerging trends and strategies that are transforming the future of person-centred care and support.

Person-centred care is about putting individuals at the heart of everything we do—focusing on their needs, dreams, and aspirations. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all services, it's about delivering personalised support that empowers people to live their best lives. At Future Directions, we believe that true person-centred care requires collaboration, creativity, and active involvement of those we support.

The *Great Lives Report* from Learning Disability England (LDE), co-produced with families and Experts-by-Experience, echoes this ethos. It outlines how to create better lives for people with learning disabilities by working together for change. The report challenges providers to move beyond standard care models and instead, aim for a human rights-focused approach where the individual's hopes and dreams are the priority. But what does this look like in practice?



“The outdated hours-based commissioning model needs to be replaced with an outcomes-driven approach.”

SPICE and Training

At Future Directions, we ensure the people we support are fully included in delivering training to our staff. **SPICE**, (Supporting People into Community Employment) is one of our most successful initiatives. Originally set up to help people with learning disabilities and autism build skills and confidence for employment, SPICE has evolved into a vital force for inclusion. The group

now plays a key role in co-developing and delivering training for both Future Directions staff and external organisations, such as Salford University, the NHS, and the Police.

SPICE members use their lived experiences to provide powerful insights. When they share their personal stories, it makes the training much more meaningful for learners, helping to challenge stereotypes and change perceptions about people with learning disabilities and autism. This inclusive approach empowers the people we support while also fostering positive attitudes and better understanding among our staff and wider audiences.

Autism Virtual Reality (VR) Training

We've also embraced innovative approaches like **Autism VR Training**, developed in collaboration with VR Doctors. This virtual reality tool allows staff to experience what it feels like to be autistic, based on the real-life experiences of the autistic people we support. The training offers a first-hand perspective of the sensory differences that autistic individuals face, building empathy and understanding among our staff.

By immersing learners in this unique experience, we aim to create more compassionate care environments that accommodate the needs of autistic people. This type of training goes beyond theory, helping staff to develop a deeper connection with those they support and providing them with the tools to offer better, more sensitive care.

Outcomes-Based Care

A key challenge in the sector is how care is traditionally commissioned—typically by the number of hours delivered. This method fails to promote true person-centred care and limits the opportunity for individuals to lead fulfilling lives. Future Directions has shifted away from this outdated system in one of our contract areas, adopting an **Outcomes-based model**.

This approach aligns with our values and allows for greater flexibility and creativity in how we support people.



The outcomes-based model focuses on the person's goals and ambitions, ensuring that care is not just about meeting basic needs but about enhancing the individual's quality of life. It gives the people we support more control and choice, empowering them to make decisions about their care. This model has led to improvements in engagement, independence, and satisfaction for those we support.

By focusing on outcomes rather than hours, we have also been able to achieve efficiencies, allowing us to reinvest resources into providing more flexible support as people's needs change. In some cases, these savings have been passed back to commissioners, demonstrating the model's cost-effectiveness while still delivering excellent care.

The Future of Person-Centred Care

Person-centred care will continue to evolve, particularly where providers embrace values-based cultures that put people first. Involving those we support in all levels of decision-making, from training to service development, is key to driving meaningful change. The outdated hours-based commissioning model needs to be replaced with an outcomes-driven approach that prioritises quality of life over quantity of care.

At Future Directions, we believe that working together with the people we support and commissioning for outcomes, not hours, will help the social care sector move towards more personalised, meaningful support. By embracing innovation, creativity, and collaboration, we can ensure that person-centred care remains the foundation of everything we do, enabling individuals to live their best lives.

 @FDirectionsCIC
 [futuredirectionscic.co.uk](https://www.futuredirectionscic.co.uk)

The power of resident engagement



Sanctuary
Supported
Living

Dave Shaw

Director
Sanctuary Supported Living

Dave Shaw is Director for Sanctuary Supported Living, a national, not-for-profit organisation. Here Dave discusses the power of resident engagement in ensuring quality, person centred supported housing.

“Residents are rightly recognised as important contributors to performance and improvement.”

There's been a shift in perspective regarding the power of resident engagement. Now, residents are rightly recognised as important contributors to the performance and improvement of supported housing. These residents, often marginalised despite their distinct support needs, are experts by their own experience. Their voices are essential to identifying challenges and ensuring our services, and ultimately their homes, are the best they can be - so residents can be their best too. Residents are at the heart of what we do. As a people-led provider, we build communities where real people live, work, and socialise, and where neighbours engage in local initiatives and look out for each other. That's why we're keen to involve as many residents as possible in every aspect of our work. If it matters to them, it matters to us.

Our satisfaction surveys are a useful consultation tool. This year, 89.1% of residents said they were happy with their support, and 89.6% felt they were supported to live as they want and achieve their goals. These invaluable customer insights help us gauge what we're doing well, and where we can aim higher.

We regularly review our suggestion boxes and promptly act on residents' suggestions. While seemingly simple, we're keen to build trust among residents and assure them they are being heard. We create vibrant 'You Said, We Did' displays that showcase the improvements we've made based on residents' feedback, but also serve as a tangible reminder that they are driving change within their communities.

Among our bigger initiatives, our Experts by Experience Tests stand out as a unique way for residents to have their say. We bring together a diverse group of customers to visit other services, and, by drawing from their lived experiences, they evaluate whether they would recommend the service to family or friends. As experts by their own experiences, residents' firsthand knowledge of the challenges, needs, and nuances of living in supported housing plays an important role in holding us accountable. It ensures we're not only meeting but exceeding both legal standards and residents' expectations, and ultimately, doing things the right way for the people who live with us and rely on our support.

Residents are also encouraged to participate in the design of their own services. Kempshfield Residential Home, for example, has long been a cornerstone of residential care for older people with learning disabilities. Now, it's transitioning to supported living with the development of Silverbirch View. As well as choosing the service's name, residents have offered practical input like moving the lift for better access and adding a canopy for easier mobility in all-weather conditions. By involving residents in this process, we not only create better services but empower them with a sense of ownership and control.

We're thrilled that our approach to fostering resident engagement is making a significant difference. We won the Supported Housing Award at this year's Learning Disability and Autism Awards, in honour of our impactful vision. Our award win is more than a recognition of our commitment to supported housing, but a testament to residents who push us to improve. By taking their lead, we can deliver high-quality services that promote independence, choice, and inclusion, to better meet their needs.

After all, our success is best reflected in their achievements. Whether we're celebrating residents' significant milestones or appreciating everyday victories, every accomplishment contributes to a life well-lived.



@SancSL

Sanctuary-supported-living.co.uk



“Our Experts by Experience Tests stand out as a unique way for residents to have their say.”

Understanding the impact of co-production



Daniel Jupp Kina
Research Analyst
Social Care Institute for Excellence

Daniel Jupp, Research Analyst in the Policy, Research, and Information team at independent charity, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), delves into evaluating the impact and success of co-production processes.

Co-production is a key practice in social care, offering opportunities for the sector to work in partnership with people with lived experience to shape practices and services.

“There are a variety of types of outcomes, and it is important to consider how you can measure them.”

At the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) we talk to people drawing on services, sector leaders, social care workers, providers, and government bodies, and it is clear that co-production plays an important role in making sure policy and services are personalised and truly meet individuals’ and communities’ needs.

In 2023 we surveyed 837 participants including people who work in adult social care and people who draw on adult social care services to understand their experiences of co-production. The results highlighted that there are many good examples of good practice, and respondents felt that co-production can make a great difference in social care, helping to shape policy and service delivery.

However, the survey also highlighted that there is a lack of consistent evidence in relation to the impact of co-production. How could people know a service was better when having co-produced it than if they had not? How could they make a powerful case for resources to undertake co-production?

How can we measure impact?

There are many definitions of impact and the ways of measuring it will vary according to the definition. Measuring impact in co-production is not an easy task, but with the help of specific tools and accessible approaches, we can learn and develop a good understanding of how to report on impact in a systematic way.

If we want to convince funders, governments, and strategic partners to invest more resources and make co-production consistent across the sector, demonstrating longer-term impact and the benefit of such investment is key to driving changes at a strategic level.

Pathway to impact

When thinking about long-term impact, a key part of the process is breaking it down and identifying how the smaller parts of the process will connect one to another to generate impact in the long term. These start with activities which include everything we do in co-production, including workshops, meetings, developing materials and more. These activities will lead to outcomes, the smaller steps that form a pathway through which, by achieving each outcome, we will make our way towards long-term impact.

Assessing outcomes

A key part of the process is assessing outcomes to understand what has been achieved so far in the journey towards impact. There are a variety of types of outcomes, and it is important to consider how you can measure them to understand if they have been achieved, and how. For example, if an outcome is to increase staff members’ knowledge on a certain subject, we will need to ask people how they rate their knowledge before and after learning sessions. Identifying the type of information you need and creating a plan for gathering and processing such information is a key part of the process.

Find out more about co-production impact

Understanding the logic of how outcomes will lead to a long-term impact and measuring the achievement of outcomes are a good start to better understanding the process and developing your own impact assessment framework.

SCIE has worked with people with experience in co-production and people with lived experience to develop a resource that helps organisations demonstrate, based on evidence, the impact that co-production is achieving. The guidance provides further details on the above steps where you can also find links to key resources and an easy-read summary to help include people with lived experience in the process. These are available on the SCIE website.

Creating gloriously ordinary lives



#socialcarefuture

Tricia NicollCo-convenor
Social Care Future

Tricia Nicoll is a mum, daughter, survivor of the mental health system, co-convenor of the positive change movement Social Care Future and agitator for the Gloriously Ordinary Lives campaign. Here she shares her valuable insight around the role of people, places, and resources in ensuring people receive great support.

Disabled people started to fight for the right for what we now know as direct payments in the late 70s, challenging the notion that there should be a bunch of 'expert' people making decisions about what money should be spent on to meet the needs of another group of people who need to draw on care and support to live their everyday lives. In 1996 the Direct Payment Act made that law.

In 2003 we first tried out the idea of self-directed support - the crazy notion that if we told people how much money we spent on them, worked with them to think about what a good life looks like and, then using public money alongside support from family, friends and communities to help make sure that good life really happened. We have personalisation, person centred support and personal budgets. We have personal health budgets and we even have personal education budgets. In every bit of policy around social care now you'll see the words 'personalised care and support' peppered liberally. Yet if you look at the majority of older and disabled people's lives, you will see support organised in ways that are focused on time and task, outputs, box ticking, processes.

The Social Care Future vision is that, *'We all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us'*. Key words there ...home, people, love, communities, what matters. The words that most of us use when we think about our own lives and what makes them good.

My experience is that, as soon as people need support from social care to enable them to live in a place they call home, a strange parallel 'Serviceland' universe takes over. We talk about placements and caseloads, accessing the community and personal care. People's lives are reduced to transactions, and we become mere service users receiving support.

"People's lives are reduced to transactions, and we become mere service users receiving support."

One of the reasons I started talking about Gloriously Ordinary Lives¹ when my kids were teenagers was to try and stop the system reverting to this 'Serviceland' thinking and speaking. As a family we were clear that we wanted our kids to have the same experience and opportunity as their non-disabled peers; local school, guides/scouts, cinema club, swimming, hanging out with friends. What we were mainly offered was a set of services that looked very different and mainly involved not doing things with other local kids. When my Mum (who lived with me) needed more than low level support, the assumption was that she would, 'go into care' - she didn't.

So, whilst there are undoubtedly issues around budgets, on the way that social care is organised and on some of the daft things we do in the name of commissioning, I maintain the biggest thing that is getting in the way of people living in the place they call home and having Gloriously Ordinary Lives is our attitudes and expectations of what people's lives should and could look like. The them and us of service user and service provider. The very fact that we hide behind words like personalisation (made up word by the way) rather than talking about good lives says it all.

So, I guess my challenge to all of you out there reading this who are part of organisations that offer support to people, is to start with Social Care Future Vision and the five tests for Gloriously Ordinary Lives ...oh and try asking people what a good life looks like to them. Do that and you won't go far wrong.

"Try asking people what a good life looks like to them."

 @socfuture
 socialcarefuture.org.uk

¹gloriouslyordinarylives.co.uk

Personal experiences drive our empathetic approach to care



Paul O'Rourke
Managing Director
Next Stage

Paul O'Rourke, Managing Director of North West care provider, Next Stage Group, emphasises the crucial role of empowering individuals who require social care, by listening to their needs and letting them take the lead.

At its core, social care is about people, not just policies. It's about focusing on the individuals we serve and putting them at the centre of everything we do. This human-centric approach, rooted in genuine empathy and understanding, is essential for shaping a more inclusive and effective social care system.

I've experienced social care from both sides. As a young person, I benefited from youth centres. Now, I lead programs to support others. This taught me an important lesson: understanding and empathy are the cornerstones of making a real difference. Whether we're working with young people or adults, initiatives that amplify their voices and allow them to take the lead not only enhance their well-being but also ensure that our services are truly responsive and effective.

Engaging communities on familiar ground

Research from the University of Hull¹ shows that people are more willing to engage with social services when approached through familiar, creative channels like theatre, arts, and sports. Football clubs, for example, have become effective hubs for community engagement for Next Stage, creating spaces where people feel at ease communicating and connecting with others. It's about meeting people where they are, both literally and figuratively. The football pitch becomes more than a playing field; it transforms into a space for dialogue, support, and growth.

"As a young person, I benefited from youth centres. Now, I lead programs to support others."



“People are more likely to engage when they’re in comfortable settings where they feel heard.”



Engaging families holistically through family hubs

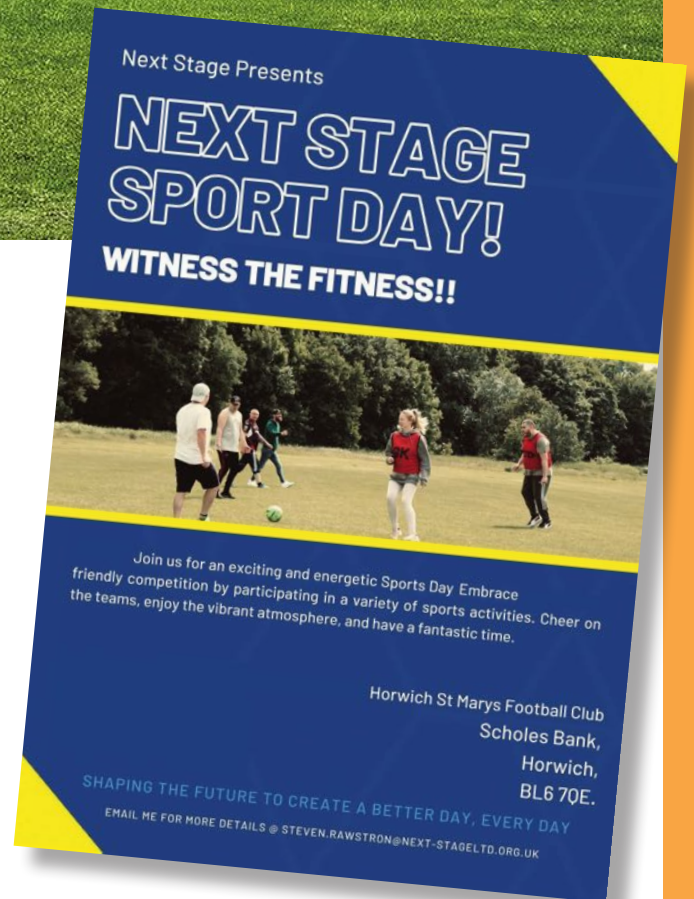
Engagement is only part of the equation. The delivery of services plays an equally crucial role in putting people at the centre of social care. Building on the concept of accessible, community-based support, family hubs offer a single access point for high-quality, whole-family support¹. This significantly cuts down on the bureaucracy that often alienates people, especially those with additional needs.

This approach makes it easier for families to receive the help they need. By engaging with people through their families, we can create a more supportive environment that addresses the needs of the entire family unit. When families feel supported and understood, they are more likely to open up and accept help.

Compassion is the key to success

As we look to the future of social care, it's clear that the path forward is one of connection, understanding, and adaptability. We must be willing to step out of our offices and into the communities we serve, to listen more than we speak, and to build services around people rather than expecting people to fit into predefined service models.

At Next Stage Group we're committed to embodying these principles. Our approach is rooted in genuine empathy and understanding, derived from personal backgrounds that mirror those we serve.



The challenges facing social care are significant, but so too are the opportunities for positive change. By putting people truly at the heart of what we do – not just in words, but in actions – we can create a system that doesn't just support, but empowers.

 nextstageawf.co.uk

¹hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/research/case-studies/engaging-marginalised-communities-through-culture

²healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/02/start-for-life-and-family-hubs-everything-you-need-to-know/

 access

Care Rostering

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The company stands behind a clear mission and set of values which define their ethos and their dedication to the Care Sector.

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What does personalised care in supported living actually look like?



CareTech
foundation

Victoria Bouamama

Registered Care Manager
and CareTech Foundation Trustee

Victoria Bouamama, a Registered Care Manager and CareTech Foundation Trustee, discusses the empowering impact of supported living services in fostering independence.

As someone who has been actively involved in the care sector both professionally and as a trustee for a care sector charity, I have witnessed first-hand the transformative power of personalised care, particularly in supported living. In a sector that has often been overlooked until recently, the impact of personalised care has remained largely unknown to the broader public. Fortunately, as society begins to shift its perspective in the post-COVID era, perceptions are changing. However, this change in perspective can only be truly powerful when people fully understand the impact. So, what does personalised care in supported living actually look like?

Supported Living Services strive to support individuals in their own homes to manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing, build community resilience, and make informed decisions and choices in their lives. These services provide opportunities to empower individuals with more complex needs, giving them greater control over the care they receive. To achieve this, providers like myself must consider many components to ensure that such outcomes are achieved. Key outcomes include shared decision-making, personalised care and support

“Individuals must be involved in all planning and risk management related to their health and wellbeing.”

planning, enabling choice (including legal rights to choose), social prescribing and community-based support, budget management, and supported self-management.

This all starts when the individual considers our services as their new home. They are initially assessed with full involvement, providing them with detailed information about the service and setting clear expectations of our team. If we are

unable to meet their requirements, we are open and honest about the reasons, ensuring they can make an informed decision about their accommodation and support options. If the individual is satisfied with the provision, we support them in meeting the team, visiting the service, and spending time to ensure they fully understand what is being offered.

In the past, individuals supported by our services would have remained in long-stay hospitals due to their needs, putting pressure on the NHS and other services due to the long-term effects of their environment and the lack of autonomy over their health needs. It was recognised that long-stay hospitals were having detrimental effects on individuals residing there, leading to lasting mental health complications and impacting their physical



health and wellbeing. Therefore, it was identified that the right to access external support from the individual's own home, as evidenced by practice, supported recovery. This approach is based on what matters to the individual, with health professionals utilising specialisms to provide the best service—right support at the right time. Individuals can then build relationships with external professionals, such as community teams, reassuring them that the support they receive is from professionals who know them well and understand their needs.

Achieving such outcomes requires that the individual is at the centre of everything important to them. They must be involved in all planning and risk management related to their health and wellbeing, including their entire life and family situations. For example, if they are leaving their home instead of the hospital, how will the family be supported? What is their involvement, and how can this relationship be maintained?

As part of this process, we must recognise

the person's skills and strengths, their experiences, and the things that matter to them. As a provider, we must support the individual in identifying outcomes, goals, and actions, and ensure these are achieved.

The benefits of such support allow us to value people as active participants and experts by experience. By understanding their own health and wellbeing, and

“The transformative power of personalised care in supported living is undeniable.”

reflecting on their achievements and solutions to their needs, we can improve the chances of successfully supporting them, promoting good levels of health and wellbeing. Consequently, this improves mental health, reduces the need for hospitalisation, and relieves pressure on the NHS. These support plans are shared among all professionals involved with the individual, eliminating the need to constantly repeat information. This also ensures that the individual is known to all provisions in their lives through a community-based personalised care package. This approach views people as “whole persons” and promotes their access to, and involvement with, healthcare teams, as they are fully empowered and respected.

In practice, as a provider, we strive to support our individuals in a personalised way. We consider protective characteristics and embrace the diversity of the people we support, recognising that we all have the ability to develop and learn from each other. Several individuals we support are part of our training team, providing guidance and training to staff teams and external professionals as part of our “expert by experience” programme. This includes individuals who have spent long periods in hospitals being treated for their mental health needs. Thanks to collaboration and support through personalised care and transitioning care programmes, they now live fulfilling lives in their own homes, with minimal support unless they request it.

Another individual is a care leaver from children's services who felt their support teams never understood their sexuality, always feeling the need to hide their true self. Now, they are part of the LGBTQ support group of trainers, sharing their experiences of growing up in care and enjoying the freedom to be themselves without judgment. These individuals have reflected on their past experiences, where their mental health and wellbeing were compromised, and where they are now—having control over their personalised care packages, with proven positive outcomes for all involved.

The transformative power of personalised care in supported living is undeniable. By placing individuals at the centre of their care, we not only honour their unique needs and preferences but also empower them to lead fulfilling lives with greater autonomy. The shift towards personalised care has demonstrated significant benefits, from enhancing mental health and wellbeing to reducing the strain on healthcare systems. As we continue to embrace and refine this approach, it is crucial to recognise and celebrate the diverse experiences and strengths that individuals bring. Ultimately, by fostering an environment of respect, inclusivity, and collaboration, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive in their own home, supported by a community that truly understands and values them.

Elevating the voices of the workforce



Karolina Gerlich
Chief Executive
The Care Workers' Charity

Karolina Gerlich, Chief Executive of The Care Workers' Charity, outlines their latest initiatives aimed at raising the profile of and giving a voice to, frontline care and support workers.

In the world of social care, the voices of care workers—those on the frontline of care delivery—are often unheard. However, at The Care Workers' Charity (CWC) we are determined to change this by placing care workers at the centre of our work. Our recent launch of the Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions Project is an example of this commitment. These initiatives, supported by The Rayne Foundation under their "Better Careers for Better Care" programme, aim to raise the voices of care workers, address critical policy issues, and ultimately put the care workforce at the forefront of shaping the future of the care sector.

The Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions Project was officially launched on September 17th at an event in the House of Lords, hosted by Baroness Kay Andrews. The project represents a significant step towards ensuring that care workers have a platform to voice their experiences, share insights, and engage with policymakers and sector leaders. Care workers play an important role in society, yet their contributions are frequently undervalued. In a sector that faces chronic underfunding, high turnover, and challenging working conditions, it is crucial to listen to those who are directly impacted, people who draw on care and people who provide care.

The new Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions will provide a structured platform for frontline care workers across

the UK to share their regional insights, collaborate with peers, and develop new skills. This network aims to ensure that care workers are not just the subject of discussions but active participants

in shaping the policies that affect their lives and the people they care for.

Participants in the Advisory Board will be compensated for their time and be able to access training and development opportunities. Members will attend bi-monthly online meetings to discuss pressing issues in the social care sector, contribute to an annual wellbeing survey for care workers, and participate in the planning and evaluation of Professional Care Workers' Week. Through these roles, care workers will have the opportunity to advise not only The Care Workers' Charity but also key stakeholders across the care sector, including politicians and decision-makers.

In addition to the Advisory Board, the Care Worker Champions Project provides another avenue for frontline workers to contribute to the sector's development. Their role involves discussing insights from the Advisory Board, wellbeing surveys, and Professional Care Workers' Week. Champions will also receive media and public speaking training, empowering them to share their experiences through writing for trade press, speaking at conferences, and participating in public discussions.

Applications for both roles opened on September 15th and will close on 15th October. Recognising the high level of interest, the selection process will not be on a first-come, first-served basis. Instead, a diverse group of care workers from

across the UK will be chosen to ensure a broad representation of voices and experiences.

The Care Workers' Charity's Advisory Board and Champions Project represent a bold step towards placing care workers at the heart of social care.

"This represents a bold step towards placing care workers at the heart of social care."

By providing them with a platform to speak, collaborate, and influence policy, the CWC is ensuring that the workforce's voice is not just heard but prioritised. This initiative underscores the importance of listening to and valuing those who provide care, and it holds the promise of driving meaningful change in the sector.

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Professor Vic Rayner, Chief Executive Officer, National Care Forum

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JEWISH CARE

Teresa O'Sullivan
Dementia Centre Coordinator
Jewish Care

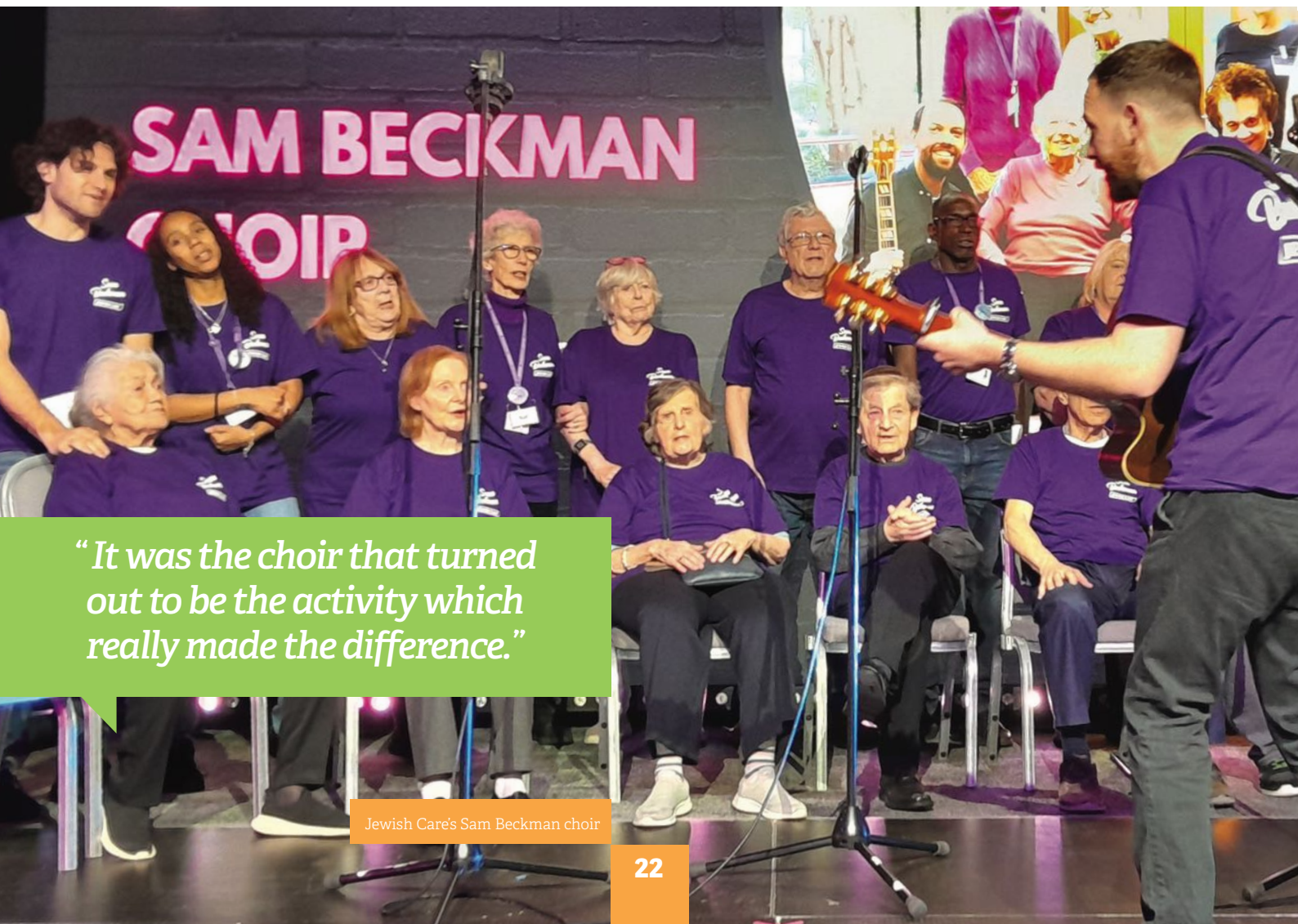
Teresa O'Sullivan, Centre Coordinator at Jewish Care's Sam Beckman Centre for people living with dementia, shares how their specialist, person-centred approach is making a transformative impact on the lives of those they support.

When Sandra first arrived at the Centre as a new member, she was quiet and introverted, this was just a few months ago. Sandra didn't accept anything to eat or drink, not even a cup of tea, and she wouldn't make eye contact.

There was some concern that the Centre wasn't right for Sandra. However, I really believed that we could support her. Our staff team and volunteers gave her time, gentle encouragement and support, until she felt more comfortable, so we could find out what really mattered to her.

Sandra has two sons, Murray and Michael, who told us that their Mum dotes on her five beautiful grandchildren. Sandra grew up in the East End and was a very talented dressmaker. She was 19 when she married Ronnie. She became a homemaker and later, a fundraiser, for many charities including Cancer Research UK, raising millions of pounds for the North London Hospice with a team of fundraisers.

They first went to the doctor in 2014 as Sandra was experiencing some memory loss and repeating herself. After scans a few years later it was confirmed that she had mild cognitive impairment and her memory progressively worsened since. The family heard about the centre and Sandra started to attend.



"It was the choir that turned out to be the activity which really made the difference."

Jewish Care's Sam Beckman choir



Sandra and Ronnie Jacobson at their engagement party

It was the choir that turned out to be the activity which really made the difference and after some time, the choir sessions helped Sandra to engage and begin to shine so we could get to know her.

Sandra began to sing and join in and engage in this creative activity. During the choir sessions we saw her body language begin to change, she was making eye contact and from there, Sandra also started to make little jokes with people and show us that she has a cheeky sense of humour and a warm personality. It was amazing to see this transformation since she arrived with us to join the Sam Beckman community.

Now Sandra is a regular and she went on the trip when we took the members to Coventry for the Care Homes Got Talent competition to perform with the choir.

Sandra also enjoys the intergenerational session with Hartbeeps, singing and using the props alongside the toddlers who come. They have such lovely interactions together, which Sandra says it takes her back to memories of her youth.

With encouragement, Sandra participates in some gentle exercise, lifting light weights, along with a lot of helpful tips from Caesar Okeyo, our Programme Assistant, on how to stay active, be healthy and continue to do the things you love and enjoy. Sandra shared that she does a lot of painting at home, when she finds the time. There is entertainment and Sandra's love for music shines through, as she taps her feet, sings along and then when invited, will dance along to the entertainer's tunes from the 1950s and 60s.

The staff and volunteers, along with Sandra's sons, feel that Sandra's time at the Centre has been transformational. They tell us that at home with her carer, she had become quite reclusive, but she is now far more engaged and animated. Although she says very little about her time there, we send her sons' photos and

“Sandra’s time at the Centre has been transformational.”



Sandra enjoying the intergenerational Hartbeeps session at Jewish Care's Sam Beckman Centre for people living with dementia

little about her time there, we send her sons' photos and they can see that in the moment she clearly really enjoys herself in a safe and caring environment. They feel that the person-centred support and activities at the Centre have given a real focus and purpose to Sandra's week.

From our perspective it seems that Sandra was able to find the kind of stimulation she needed to enjoy her time, be engaged and present. It gives us so much pleasure to see this, there really is no greater reward than this, in the work we do.



@Jewish_Care
jewishcare.org

Sandra dancing with **Caesar Okeyo**, Programme Assistant to 1950s and 1960s songs

The power of curiosity in dementia day care



THE
FILO
PROJECT

Dr Liz Dennis
Co-Director and Co-Founder
The Filo Project

Dr Liz Dennis is Co-Director and Co-Founder of The Filo Project, a dementia care social enterprise that invites small groups with early to moderate dementia into hosts' homes, blending the founders' backgrounds in dementia care and research. Here she reflects on the transformative power of curiosity in dementia day care.

Dementia has been cited as the biggest social challenge of our time, with numbers set to reach 1.4m by 2040. TV and films depict the worst stereotypes, the loss of self

and shrinking away from life. True, dementia takes so much from families and is incredibly challenging. But it's not a living death.

People with dementia can flourish and experience joy and meaning if we treat them as the valued person they still are and hold curiosity at the heart of their care. This is at the core of The Filo Project model and we see the effects every day.

A Filo day involves groups of four people with early to moderate dementia being collected by a Host (an employed, not voluntary, position) who takes these clients back to her or his own home for the day. There is no set schedule, except lunch, yet the consistency of groups and hosts allows friendships to form and patterns to emerge, specific to each group and the individuals within them. The more intimate, homely setting allows people to grow in confidence, make friends and reduce their risk of physical and mental health issues associated with isolation. Meanwhile, family carers have regular, extended respite from the challenges of looking after a loved one with dementia.

"I believe sociable social care should draw as much hope as the new dementia treatments."





We are proud of the outcomes we achieve and below is a representative testimonial:

Dad doesn't rely on me so much. He's gone from telephoning me 9 times a day to possibly 4 times a week. We seem to have part of his old self back. Dad had been a hostage to his vascular dementia, feeling uneasy in public not knowing what to say or do, The Filo Project has given him a new lease of life and a greater way of coping with his illness.



So why does our type of support yield such results? Memory-loss is perhaps the most prominent of dementia symptoms, but our Hosts are experts at drawing out people's deeply sedimented knowledge and capacities, by applying curiosity to their care.

These capacities are highly specific to each individual and might reveal themselves as an interest in local history, poetry reciting, encyclopedic knowledge of jazz piano, or even veg-peeling deftness.

To discover this information Hosts need to be curious about people and the world, and perceptive, responsive listeners. Once unearthed and harnessed, these kinds of memory or knowledge reinforce people's sense of identity, leading to increased confidence and even symptom reduction.

Social care needs to be sociable. Social isolation correlates with other high-profile health risks, such as smoking and obesity. Old age can make accessing existing friends difficult, added to the sad fact that social circles diminish. Our small group model provides ease of access to manageable socialising, which is important; socialising with contemporaries, with whom one has a connection on a regular basis, means that clients feel a valued part of a community.

I believe sociable social care should draw as much hope and herald as the new dementia treatments, donanemab and lecanemab, which reportedly slow progression of Alzheimer's by a third. Neither treatment has yet been approved for use in the NHS and even if they are, they are only effective for people in the early stages of Alzheimer's. They are also very expensive, costing reportedly approximately £20,000 per person per year.

The drive within social care is to keep people with dementia living in their own homes for as long as is safe and manageable. It's what our clients, families and cash-strapped local authorities want.

Given that our kind of sociable social care makes real and tangible difference to people living with dementia now, and at a fraction of the price, it doesn't make sense that this resource isn't being exploited more.

As Prof Sube Banerjee (who led the development of the UK National Dementia Strategy) says, "Dementia is a complex illness that demands complex solutions, there is no one size fits all and no magic bullet." My call to the new government would be for them to take on board this perspective and invest in social interventions effecting positive change for people now.

"Our Hosts are experts at drawing out peoples' deeply sedimented knowledge, by applying curiosity to their care."

Treating the person, not the diagnosis



Nurseline
Community Services

Lesley Robins
Community Mental Health Nurse
Nurseline Community Services

Lesley Robins, Community Mental Health Nurse at Nurseline Community Services, a complex care provider, discusses the significance of personalised care and the importance of treating the individual, not just the diagnosis.

“At the core of personalised care is the individual we are working with.”

At Nurseline Community Services, a specialised department within Catalyst Care Group, we provide a safe and therapeutic environment for individuals with complex emotional needs who might otherwise be in institutional settings like psychiatric hospitals or secure facilities. Many of those we support are under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) legislation. Our focus is on delivering intensive home treatment with the ultimate goal of recovery.

As a Senior Practitioner and Registered Mental Health Nurse within Nurseline Community Services, my primary responsibility is to facilitate early discharges from, or prevent admissions to, psychiatric hospitals or secure settings. Leading a team of experienced staff, I oversee the delivery of personalised care tailored to each individual we support.

While diagnosis is a crucial component of informing treatment and the care we provide, it is vital that we do not reduce individuals to mere labels. Personalised care highlights the importance of treating the person, not just the diagnosis. This approach ensures that care plans are crafted around each individual's unique needs, fostering a therapeutic alliance that allows for honest and open conversations. This, in turn, builds trust and optimises the recovery process.

At the core of personalised care is the individual we are working with. Their goals, dreams, and aspirations should be the foundation of their care planning. By focusing on small, realistic, and measurable goals, we can instill hope and promote recovery. Sometimes, it is necessary to hold that hope for individuals during times of distress, reminding them that their distress is temporary and manageable.

Formulation is a critical step between assessment and care planning. It involves actively listening to the person and ensuring that the process is done with them, not to them, using their own words and language. Formulation enables a collaborative and shared understanding of needs, initiating the formation of a therapeutic alliance and paving the way for joint goal setting.

The 5 P's model offers a comprehensive framework for formulation. I often ask individuals to identify their own needs and find it helpful to use a large piece of paper to draw big circles. Placing the person in the central circle, I listen to their story, and together, we organise their experiences and events into the 5 P's: Presenting Problem, Predisposing Factors, Precipitating Factors, Perpetuating Factors, and Protective Factors.

This collaborative approach helps validate the individual's distress and emotions, aiding them in making sense of their experiences and understanding how these experiences have led to their current situation. This embodiment of personalised care encourages active involvement in their own care planning.

This process fosters a collaborative and shared understanding of needs, allowing for a mutually agreed-upon dialogue to set goals, manage expectations, and identify helpful and unhelpful factors.

A key aspect of personalised care is empowering individuals to develop a skill set that enables them to manage their distress. By concentrating on their unique needs, goals, and dreams, and by fostering a therapeutic alliance, we create a supportive environment that promotes hope, recovery, and a sense of ownership over their health.

Ultimately, personalised care is a holistic approach that places the individual at the centre of their care. It empowers individuals to take an active role in their journey towards well-being, fostering a sense of ownership in their recovery. This approach not only enhances the quality of care but also ensures that individuals feel valued and understood as they navigate their path to recovery.

“It is vital that we do not reduce individuals to mere labels.”

 nurselinecs.co.uk

Supported living isn't enough



Peter Kinsey
Chief Executive
Iris Care Group

Peter Kinsey, Chief Executive at Iris Care Group, a provider of care and support, shares his thoughts on the importance of meaningful engagement for people with learning disabilities.

“The idea that giving someone a tenancy agreement will automatically transform a person's life is frankly naive.”

I have worked with people with learning disabilities for nearly 40 years. A passion throughout that time has been promoting engagement in meaningful activity. I've visited thousands of services for people with learning disabilities over the years, including as a consultant as well as a senior manager. My rather depressing conclusion is that engagement in meaningful activity is still pretty poor in many places.

We made a huge step forward in the 1980s and 1990s when we closed the long-stay hospitals and I remember the passion we had to really change people's lives. Sadly, I'm not sure that much has changed since then. Supported living was supposed to be the big game changer. Some people still hold on to this view almost as though it's a religious truth. Yes, there are some very good supported living services out there, but there is also a lot of poor quality with people being supported who are living fairly barren lives. The idea that giving someone a tenancy agreement will automatically transform a person's life is frankly naive.

I think part of the problem is that commissioners who set service specifications almost never visit services and a lot of them have no experience of actually working in or running services. The problem is compounded by a regulatory system which seems to be more interested in infection control and whether staff training is compliant than on what sort of life people being supported are having. I spoke to a number of fellow CEOs a few weeks ago and we all agreed that neither commissioning nor regulation drive improvement in the lives of people we support; that comes down to leadership and culture in individual organisations.

At Iris Care Group, we are doing a lot of work to implement “active support”. Many of you will be familiar with the term which has been around for nearly 30 years. I first learned about “active support” from the inspirational Professor Jim Mansell who we sadly lost at a young age. It was quite fashionable back in the 1990s but I don't hear people talking about it so much now. I still think it should be central to service provision.

The key concept behind “active support” is that people can and should be involved in everyday activity, irrespective of their level of disability. Rather than having activities that are meaningless and designed simply to pass the time (the one that really annoys me is going for drives !), “active support” encourages staff to see opportunities to involve people in functional activities of daily living, like cooking, shopping, cleaning, gardening and hanging out the washing.

There are 4 key principles behind “active support”:

- **Every Moment Has Potential**
- **Little and Often** (it's OK for people with a short attention span to dip in and out of activities while the staff member continues)
- **Graded Assistance** (providing just enough support to enable the person to participate, which could include verbal or physical prompting)
- **Maximising Choice and Control**

We have adopted a cascading training model which was developed by the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent. The senior operational team were trained in “active support” and observed working with a person to make sure that they could demonstrate it in practice. They then train and observe front-line staff. This approach is working well and we are very fortunate in Iris Care Group to have senior operational managers who are also very good practice leaders. I don't think we talk enough about the importance of practice leadership which I think is essential in the provision of high quality person-centred support.

I visit services every week and am always delighted when I either see “active support” happening or am shown photos of people we support engaging in meaningful activity.

“Engagement in meaningful activity is still pretty poor in many places.”

 @iriscaregroup
 iriscaregroup.co.uk

The best of the best in Positive Behaviour Support



The Kent Autistic Trust (KAT) were celebrated recently when they took home the Positive Behaviour Support Award at the National Learning Disability and Autism Awards.



Tamsin Gregory-Conquest
The Kent Autistic Trust

The Kent Autistic Trust has always been a leading Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) force, celebrating and respecting neurodiversity and striving to have a deep understanding of the lives of autistic individuals.

“Like so many people, Tamsin fell into care by accident.”

Tamsin Gregory-Conquest, was the ultimate winner in the PBS category judged to be the best in the country amongst selected national providers. She sat down with us to talk about her journey into PBS and what the award means to her and her team.

Like so many people, Tamsin fell into care by accident. She was a hard worker who left home and supported herself by taking a variety of jobs in the hospitality and care sectors. She began her care journey as a night support worker, working with elderly people with dementia in an EMI unit. A stint with Care in the Community working with people with Mental Health difficulties followed and then a residential home for people with LD. By now, Tamsin’s passion for the care sector had been ignited but she was finding that the management roles she was progressing towards meant less time with the people who mattered to her the most; the people she was supporting.

It was this desire to make a difference directly that led Tamsin to applying for the PBS assistant role at KAT. Whilst Tamsin had completed PBS training it wasn’t something she’d encountered much in the wild. It was often hypothetical and patchy in its implementation. She could tell straight away that KAT was different and remembers thinking how refreshing it was that PBS was something which was happening in practice throughout the organisation. She recalls that in those days PBS was a bit more formal and theoretical. She immediately got to work ensuring that the abstract was put into practice and was embedded throughout the organisation. When the Head of PBS role became available, imposter

syndrome prevented her from applying for the role but after some encouragement from the Chief Executive of the Trust, she took on that leadership role and has never looked back!

Tamsin feels strongly that sitting behind a desk cannot achieve the desired results and is passionate about taking the training direct to the staff and working hands on as much as possible. This is instrumental in building good relationships with staff and wins the trust of the people she supports. She has trained on the job picking up formal qualifications along the way which partner with her practical approach. This includes the ability to train others in Studio III non aversive methods which have always been central to KAT’s philosophy. Becoming a trainer was not something that came easily to Tamsin; she remembers feeling sick with anxiety about speaking publicly in the early days. She feels very strongly, however, that she needs to be able to demonstrate best practice and by doing this wins confidence and builds resilience.

Tamsin feels that her team have hit their stride. They are increasingly able to look at the big picture rather than focussing on one crisis or one individual at a time. She is looking to bigger projects, expanding co-production, working with Home Not Hospitals increasing the team’s mental health specialism and working with partner organisations to roll out Oliver McGowan training across Kent and Medway.

On her awards success Tamsin said *“I am so thrilled and incredibly proud to have won the PBS Award at the National Learning Disability and Autism Awards. This award is a testament to the hard work and absolute dedication of my team in promoting positive support approaches and enhancing quality of life for the people we support. I am incredibly grateful for the recognition and would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my specialist team and all the amazing individuals I have the privilege to work and co-produce with.”*

“Tamsin feels strongly that sitting behind a desk cannot achieve the desired results.”

 @kentautistic
 kentautistictrust.org

Shaking up the world of arts



Access All Areas, winners of the Breaking Down Barriers Award at the National Learning Disability & Autism Awards 2024, are all about shaking up the world of arts through award-winning disruptive performances!

They're empowering learning disabled and autistic creatives to take on roles across the industry – from performing on stage to leading decision-making behind the scenes.

Known for their bold and interactive performances, Access All Areas creates unforgettable moments in the most unexpected places – whether it's on stage, in public spaces, or even online. But they're not just making waves with their shows. Their Associate Artists team is dedicated to making the arts more inclusive for learning disabled and autistic talent. From community engagement to future artist training, and working with TV, film, and theatre companies, they're breaking down barriers to make workplaces and creative spaces more accessible.

Their work goes beyond productions. Access All Areas leads the charge in reshaping our cultural landscape with a clear mission: to challenge exclusion at every level. And it's not just lip service – their co-led approach, with learning disabled and autistic artists at the forefront, means lived experience is woven into every decision they make.

"Culture is for everyone," says Paul Christian, one of their artists and leaders. *"It's about being part of something bigger and adding your originality to the world. We need to hear everyone's voice. It's not one person influencing another; it's humans working together to create something beautiful."* Paul emphasises that for too long, disabled voices have been sidelined, and it's time to bring their stories forward to shift perspectives and change society.

Access All Areas believes that without disabled co-leaders, the arts risk falling back into old habits of stereotyping. Their artists' lived experiences aren't just valuable—they're vital for shaping a more inclusive future in governance, consultancy, and creative leadership.

The company's roots are in community outreach, making culture accessible for those who might otherwise be excluded. They even offer career progression, like their two-year Performance Making Diploma.

As Paul puts it, *"Power doesn't always have to be left to the 'normal' people in charge – it can be done differently!"*

Paul Christian one of the artist and leaders at Access All Areas

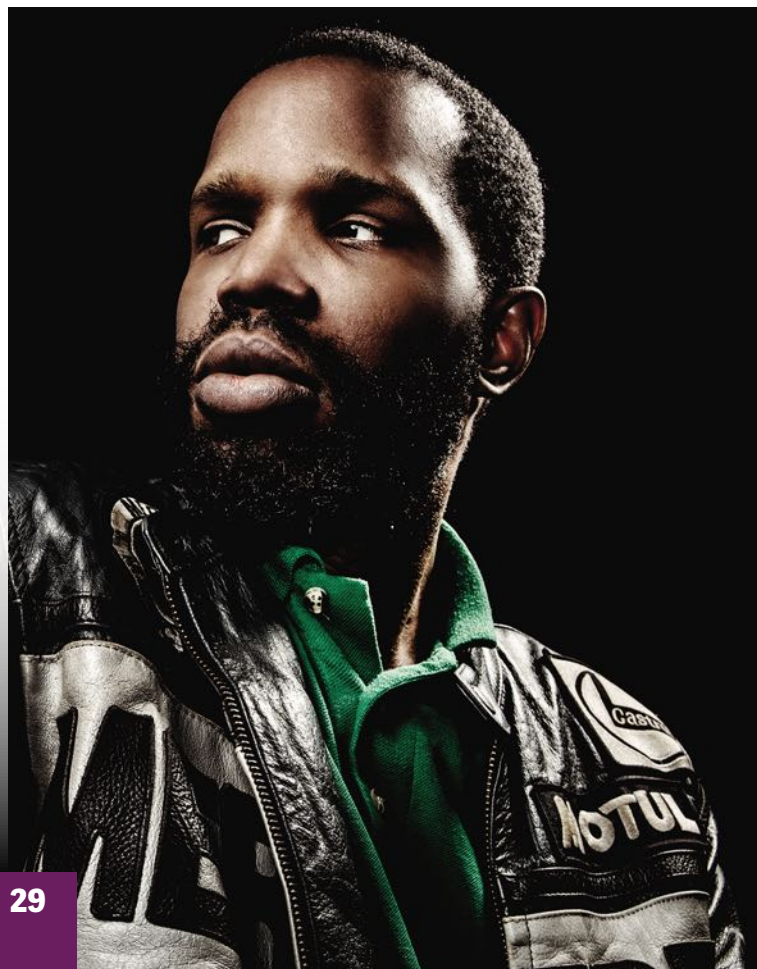
As Paul puts it, *"Power doesn't always have to be left to the 'normal' people in charge – it can be done differently!"*

For Paul, this journey has been transformative. *"I never thought I'd be in this position – a leader! As deputy chair of the board, I can influence decisions, whereas before, I felt stuck. This opportunity has allowed me to express myself in ways I never thought possible."*

Looking ahead, Paul dreams of a world where more disabled people find work, where tolerance replaces stigma, and where disabled creatives are represented on stage and screen as the funny, flawed, and funky people they are. Winning the Breaking Down Barriers award is, in Paul's words, *"an incredible honour. It feels like recognition of what we've achieved and proof that with enough drive, anything is possible. It's a benchmark of the excellence we strive for."*

"They are dedicated to making the arts more inclusive for learning disabled and autistic talent."

 accessallareasproductions.org



Breaking down barriers behind bars

Maria's impact on prison healthcare



Maria O'Neil's impact on the prison healthcare system has been nothing short of transformative. Drawing on her deep experience in hospice care, she has revolutionised how the prison service supports inmates with life-limiting illnesses.

Her passion, dedication, and tireless efforts have introduced much-needed improvements to palliative care within prisons, leaving a lasting legacy that will benefit incarcerated individuals for years to come. This exceptional commitment was recognised recently when Maria won *The Excellence in Palliative Care Nursing* category at the Palliative Care Awards, a testament to her transformative impact and the high regard in which her work is held within the field.

Maria's journey into palliative care started in 1991, driven by a deeply personal experience. When her grandfather was diagnosed with stomach cancer, structured palliative care was virtually non-existent. Maria, determined to provide the support he needed, spent nine months caring for him around the clock—sleeping on a mattress beside him every night while working as a nurse during the day. Witnessing his suffering firsthand ignited her mission to ensure that no one else would have to endure such pain without proper care.

After her grandfather passed, Maria's career took her to Thorpe Hall Hospice in Peterborough, where she rose to a Band 7 Sister position, honing her skills in end-of-life care. Then, in an unexpected twist, a friend at HMP Littlehey introduced her to the world of prison healthcare. Maria was intrigued by the unique challenges and potential impact she could have, and since stepping into this new environment, she hasn't looked back.



Maria O'Neil at the Palliative Care Awards with presenters **Neev Spencer** and **Kate Garraway**

Reflecting on her recent win at The Palliative Care Awards, Maria said, *"This victory wasn't mine alone but a shared achievement with the healthcare team at HMP Littlehey. We're a close-knit family, supporting each other in our mission to provide exceptional care for our patients."* That sense of teamwork and dedication is what fuels her passion for the work. *"Caring for patients at the end of their lives is the most rewarding and privileged role you could possibly be in,"* she shared.

"Maria has been the driving force behind many improvements in prison palliative care."

Over the years, Maria has been the driving force behind many improvements in prison palliative care. She brought the hospice model into the prison system, introducing Advanced Care Plans and helping create the "Last Days of Life Care Plan." She was also a key contributor to the "Dying Well in Custody Charter," presenting her work back to Macmillan in Manchester. Maria's innovative spirit didn't stop there—she developed an early identification tool to help recognise inmates in their last 12 months of life, allowing for better care planning and support.

Beyond her role at HMP Littlehey, Maria runs the Crayfish Cancer Support Group for incarcerated patients and travels nationwide, presenting at conferences alongside Dr Annelise Matthews from Edinburgh University. Since 2021, she has focused exclusively on her role as a Palliative Clinical Nurse Specialist for Cambridgeshire secured services, a position she describes as the most fulfilling of her career. Her contributions were further recognised with the prestigious Queen's Nurse Award for her work in this field.

Maria's passion for her work is undeniable. She believes she has *"the best job in the world,"* as she guides her patients from diagnosis to death, helping them choose where they wish to spend their final days—whether in prison, hospital, or hospice. For Maria, prison healthcare isn't just a job; it's a calling. It's a deeply personal and professionally rewarding journey, allowing her to care for some of society's most vulnerable individuals, offering them dignity, compassion, and peace in their final moments.

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Sporting support

Dementia Active's game plan for change



HIGHLY COMMENDED

A groundbreaking initiative In Coventry and Warwickshire, known as Dementia Active is transforming the lives of individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

Launched in 2022, this innovative programme is a collaboration between *Sky Blues in the Community*, the charitable arm of Coventry City Football Club, and the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust. Its goal is to enhance social engagement, physical activity, and emotional well-being through a blend of sports and therapeutic support.

Dementia Active offers free two-hour sessions in Coventry, Warwick, and Nuneaton. The first hour is dedicated to various sports, including badminton, soft archery, boccia, quoits, football, basketball, and skittles. These activities are designed to cater to all energy levels, ensuring participants of all abilities can join in. To evoke cherished memories and uplift spirits, familiar music from the 1950s and 60s plays throughout the sessions, adding an extra element of enjoyment.

The second hour provides a more relaxed environment, where participants gather in a breakout room for tea, coffee, and biscuits. This time allows for socialising and cognitive stimulation, with staff from *Sky Blues* engaging participants in interactive quizzes. A key feature of the session is Winnie, the *Sky Blues Therapy Dog*, who has become a beloved companion. Winnie provides emotional and sensory comfort, further enriching the friendly and supportive atmosphere.

“Dementia Active stands out for its innovative use of sports to support individuals with dementia.”

To enhance the experience for participants, *Sky Blues in the Community* organises special events, including stadium tours and match-day surprises at Coventry City Football Stadium, with support from Coventry Building Society. Participants get behind-the-scenes access to areas like the players' changing rooms and the manager's office. On match days, they enjoy food and drinks in a wheelchair-accessible lounge, followed by a short walk to the directors' box for an exciting view of the game. Feedback from these events has been overwhelmingly positive, with one participant describing a match-day experience as *“one of the best days of my life.”*

The partnership between *Sky Blues in the Community* and the *Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS*

Trust has been crucial to the success of *Dementia Active*. The collaboration has not only improved participants' quality of life but has also resulted in several award nominations. The project received a special commendation at the National Dementia Care Awards in London and has been nominated for the Q Awards in Coventry for its outstanding collaborative efforts.



Dementia Active stands out for its innovative use of sports and social interaction as tools to support individuals with dementia. The project creates an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of ability, can engage in meaningful activities that foster connection and improve well-being. The combination of physical activity and social interaction has proven to be a powerful way to enhance participants' mental and emotional health.

The use of therapeutic dogs, interactive quizzes, and familiar music creates a holistic approach to dementia care, addressing not just the physical but also the emotional and social needs of individuals. This unique blend of activities is particularly important in creating a supportive community for participants, many of whom face isolation and loneliness.

As *Dementia Active* continues to grow, its founders remain committed to expanding its reach and improving the lives of those affected by dementia. The partnership between *Sky Blues in the Community* and the NHS Trust is a testament to their shared dedication to making a positive impact in the lives of individuals living with dementia. With plans to further develop the programme and broaden its services, *Dementia Active* is set to remain a vital resource for families navigating the challenges of dementia.

John Szyndler, Health and Wellbeing Manager at *Sky Blues in the Community*, emphasised the importance of the project, stating, *“Our collaboration with CWPT is vital in enhancing the quality of Dementia Active, allowing us to provide comprehensive support that truly makes a difference in participants' lives.”*

The project is a shining example of how sports, companionship, and social care can come together to create lasting positive changes in the lives of those living with dementia.

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Ian Pritchard

Chief Executive, Alternative Futures Group

Ian Pritchard, Chief Executive at health and social care charity Alternative Futures Group, shares his thoughts on the on the current state of social care and hopes for the future.

Despite being in power for almost three months now, Labour's silence on social care has been deafening.

The new government's manifesto promised a National Care Service and better pay for care workers, yet our sector remains in the dark, still reeling from a decade of devastating Tory cuts.

The previous government's decision to reduce National Insurance payments may have scored political points and added a few pounds to everyone's pockets; it only deepened the financial crisis in our struggling care sector.

"I urge Westminster to provide urgent clarity to help secure crucial services for our most vulnerable."

Labour's thumping majority allows this administration to be brave. So what's preventing them from reversing these tax cuts and reinvesting that money back into social care where it's desperately needed? Is it a lack of political will or priority?

At Alternative Futures Group (AFG) our mission is to deliver outstanding, person-centred support that empowers people to live independently. But without a clear Government funding strategy, this has never been more challenging to deliver.

I urge Westminster to provide the urgent clarity to help stabilise and secure crucial services for our most vulnerable.

At AFG we support more than 900 adults across the North West with either a learning disability, autism or a mental health condition, and employ more than 1,600 dedicated staff. Despite market challenges, we are dedicated to making a difference and driving positive change for the people we support.

As a sector we face systematic inequality, as national and local governments continue to prioritise elderly care funding, resulting in better support and pay. It's no wonder elderly care retains staff more effectively.

We cannot allow this two-tier funding situation to endure. Social care isn't just for the elderly. Don't those outside of elderly care such as valuable people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health conditions deserve the same high standards of person-centred care? We believe they do, and action is needed now.

But it's not just the government that needs to get its house in order. We as a provider industry also need to face up to some very tough decisions.

With over 14,500 social care providers across the UK - most being small local organisations - the system is fragmented, inefficient and inconsistent in quality.

We need to have frank and honest conversations around provider consolidation to reduce costs and improve quality and outcomes for those we support.

Of course, as a large provider, consolidation is something we might be expected to advocate. But, the benefits for the sector, service users and tax payers are too great to ignore.

Strategic reform and innovation in care services can benefit everyone. Collaboration can also prevent the rise of large national care providers, keeping person-centred support in the hands of local carers.


By optimising the limited funding and reducing waste, more money can also be directed to the 1.5 million dedicated care workers who hold this sector together.

But we can only do this through a sea change in the national conversation. And this requires greater public awareness and pressure on our politicians for change. No longer should social care play fourth fiddle to the economy, NHS and education.

At AFG we are playing our part to improve the system by significantly investing in technology to provide tailored, one-to-one care that promotes independence, choice and control, while saving costs.

I believe that with government and provider collaboration on reform, innovative commissioning, and technology, we can turn the tide. With bold changes, I'm optimistic about the future of care and our positive impact on those in need.

With the Party conference season kicking off this month, we will be listening intently to the Government's stance on these issues.

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 afgroup.org.uk



Ian Pritchard
Chief Executive
Alternative Futures Group





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NCF supports its members to improve social care provision and enhance the quality of life, choice, control and wellbeing of people who use care services. We work directly with not for profit providers of care and support services across the UK offering:

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- National events spread throughout the year – offering expertise, collaboration and knowledge exchange
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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO CARE

From Cabbie to Care: How Alanna's New 'Knowledge' is transforming lives

Throughout the year we profile a care professional who has come into the sector after a career change and who demonstrates that it really is never too late to care! This month we meet Alanna Alston, a Deputy Manager from PBS Care Ltd, who's journey working as a London taxi driver, led her to a career in care.



PBS Care Ltd was born with one big mission: to make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable children with special needs. These are children who've had it tough, often facing extra challenges on top of already difficult circumstances. Julie Woraker, one of the company's directors with over 30 years of experience in residential care, felt the need to create something special—a team of passionate people dedicated to helping these unique young individuals.

“Alanna, a former London taxi driver, was looking for a fresh start after caring for her nan.”

Enter Alanna Alston, a former London taxi driver who was looking for a fresh start after caring for her nan. Julie saw something in Alanna and convinced her to come to Thaxted, a charming little town in Essex, for an interview. Alanna was hesitant—she'd never worked with children before, let alone the UK's most vulnerable ones. But she loved the idea of helping others and took a leap of faith, landing the job as a support worker.

Fast forward six months, and Alanna was thriving. She took on the role of Senior Support Worker, facing

the daily challenges of residential care head-on. Another six months later, while working on her Level 4 diploma in Children, Young People & Families, Alanna's understanding of autism and learning disabilities deepened. She became even more passionate about supporting these incredible children, especially after witnessing the discrimination they often face.

When the Deputy Manager position opened up, Alanna knew it was where she was meant to be. She was fully committed to helping these children live their best lives, even amid the chaos of a global pandemic.



Alanna Alston, Deputy Manager with Julie Woraker Responsible Individual and Director at PBS Care Ltd

Four years later, Alanna's journey from a London cabbie to Deputy Manager is nothing short of inspiring. She's completed her Level 5 diploma with distinction, navigated the complexities of Ofsted regulations, and led a fantastic team - all while helping the children she supports transform their lives.

Alanna's dedication didn't go unnoticed. In 2024, she won the 'Making A Difference Individual' category at the National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards, proving that anyone can make a difference with the right mindset and understanding.



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A little about us

BKR Care Consultancy was founded in 2011 and has since grown to become a leading Care Consultancy firm in the UK.

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HAVE YOUR SAY!

3 Wishes!

Kelly Green, Highstone Mews Deputy Manager, Strong Life Care

As a dedicated nurse with a background in palliative care, I have three important wishes to enhance social care.

- 1 First, let's talk about **funding!** We need more resources for end-of-life care. Everyone deserves compassionate, 1-to-1 attention in their final days. With better funding, we can ensure that both residents and their families receive the support they truly need.
- 2 My second wish is for **greater recognition** of care staff—the unsung heroes of our sector. These incredible individuals do so much more than their job requires. They make residents feel safe, cared for, and loved—treating them like family. Let's celebrate their dedication and heart! It's time to shine a light on the incredible work they do every single day.
- 3 Finally, my third wish is for **specialised care settings** for younger individuals with early-onset dementia or mental health issues. Placing them in environments designed for advanced dementia patients doesn't meet their needs. We must create spaces that focus on their emotional, mental, and social wellbeing to truly improve their quality of life.

These three wishes—more funding, recognition, and specialised support—could transform the future of social care and ensure dignity and compassion for everyone involved.



In The Spotlight

Saltash care home resident celebrates 100th birthday

A Century of Joy: Mary Barnes Celebrates 100th Birthday at Anchor's St Anne's.

Mary Barnes, a beloved resident of Anchor's St Anne's care home in Saltash, recently celebrated her 100th birthday with a joyful celebration on the 28th of September, surrounded by family and friends. The festivities included a heartfelt note from the King and Queen and a special visit from Saltash Mayor Cllr Julia Pegg.

Born on the 28th of August 1924 in Penzance, Mary grew up in the Cornish village of Paul with her siblings. Her father, William, worked hard during the Great Depression, with support from her mother, Evelyn.

Mary began a new chapter of life when she met William (Billy) Barnes, a World War II merchant seaman. They married in 1944 and raised three wonderful children, navigating the challenges of life, including the loss of their first child. After a fulfilling career at the Newlyn Wool Shop, Mary retired in 2000 and now enjoys the company of her six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Mary attributes her long life to hard work, fresh air, and a loving family. "I've had ups and downs," she says, "but I'm very lucky and happy."

Lisa Honeywell, Home Manager at Anchor's St Anne's, shares, "Mary's infectious smile and kindness brighten our days. She's truly an inspiration."



Movers & Shakers

Gaj Muraliwaran & Usha Ramupillai, SureCare

Transforming Home Care: A Family's Mission to Provide Compassionate Support in Sevenoaks.

A dynamic mother-son team is bringing a full range of home care services to Sevenoaks! Gaj Muraliwaran and his mother, Usha Ramupillai, are the proud directors of SureCare East Surrey and Sevenoaks, based in Riverhead. Joined by registered manager Tracy Dankert, who boasts over 20 years of experience in the care sector, they've recently achieved Care Quality Commission (CQC) registration, allowing them to provide both regulated and non-regulated care services. With this milestone, clients can enjoy personal care right at home! Their regulated offerings cover everything from bathing and nutrition support to companionship and live-in care.

Starting strong in Sevenoaks, they're ready to expand into East Surrey and are actively recruiting passionate care workers to meet growing demand. Inspired by their own experiences finding quality care for Gaj's father and grandmother, Gaj and Usha are on a mission to provide compassionate, person-centered support. Gaj sums it up perfectly: **"We want to empower our clients and support their families!"** As they network in the community and seek like-minded individuals, they're committed to becoming the top home care provider in the region. Gary Farrer, Managing Director of SureCare, is equally excited, stating, **"I'm thrilled that Gaj and Usha are making such a positive impact!"** Keep an eye on this inspiring duo!



Lightbulb Moment

Jas Chauhan, Managing Director, Caremark Cannock Chase & South Staffordshire

Brightening lives: Meet Genie, the revolutionary care companion!

At Caremark Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire, we're excited to unveil our Light Bulb Moment — a revolutionary breakthrough that's redefining home care! We're proud to be pioneers in integrating AI into our services by teaming up with Service Robotics to introduce Genie, an innovative robot designed to bring joy, connection, and support to our clients' lives.

Genie is packed with features tailored to individual needs. It streams music from Spotify and plays films and TV shows, offering endless entertainment. But it's more than just fun—it's a true companion that promotes health and well-being. With personalised reminders for eating, drinking, and medication, Genie helps clients maintain healthy routines. What truly sets Genie apart is its connectivity. Clients can video chat with other Genie users, fostering community and reducing isolation. Plus, its mobile app keeps clients connected with family and friends, even if they don't have a Genie.

By introducing Genie, we're empowering our clients to lead independent, fulfilling lives and setting a bold new standard in home care. This innovation enhances care quality and reinforces our commitment to improving the well-being and happiness of the individuals we support.



Now have your say!

Do you have any thoughts you'd care to share? Care Talk want to hear from you! Email lisa@care-awards.co.uk for the opportunity to appear in upcoming editions.

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

Coming up...

Social Care Top 30 Awards

15th October 2024
Grosvenor Square Hotel, London

The Children & Young People Awards

24th October 2024
ICC, Birmingham

Great British Care Regional Awards

1st November 2024 East of England
Milton Keynes Dons

2nd November 2024 West Midlands
ICC, Birmingham

6th November 2024 Wales
Marriott Cardiff

7th November 2024 North East
Grand Hotel Gosforth Park, Newcastle

8th November 2024 Yorkshire & Humberside
Royal Armouries, Leeds

9th November 2024 North West
Kimpton Clocktower Hotel, Manchester

14th November 2024 South West
Ashton Gate, Bristol

15th November 2024 South East
Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton

16th November 2024 London
Hilton Bankside, London

27th November 2024 East Midlands
East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham

Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards

28th November 2024
Hilton Bankside, London

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



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My journey into social care has been anything but straightforward

Ameet Kotecha, Founder of Boutique Care Homes, reflects on how his personal journey into social care has shaped and inspired his approach to leadership within the sector.

“It’s about empowering people and helping them to grow and adapt.”

Leadership in social care is more critical now than ever. For me, it’s fundamentally about empowering people, helping them to grow and adapt. The landscape of social care has changed dramatically over the past few years, and the challenges we face are ever-evolving. Leadership, in this context, is an invaluable skill. At Boutique Care Homes, our success is deeply rooted in our people’s warmth and dedication. They are the reason residents and their families choose us. Therefore, nurturing our team and ensuring their growth is crucial for creating the warm, loving communities where everyone feels at home. Without strong leadership, we wouldn’t be able to achieve our vision.

My journey into social care has been anything but straightforward. I’ve been incredibly fortunate to benefit from the guidance and examples set by experienced leaders. Their willingness to share both their successes and setbacks has profoundly influenced my approach. This generosity has led me to reflect on how we can cultivate a truly welcoming and trusting culture at Boutique. We recognise that everyone is human and makes mistakes, so we encourage everyone to step up as leaders in their roles. Our focus on continuous improvement means we support our people in their personal and professional development.

One of my proudest moments was winning the Best Care Home Group (Small) at the National Care Awards in 2023. That night was a culmination of years of hard work from every team member across our homes. Being recognised by our peers, who understand the unique challenges and rewards of social care, was both an honour and a memorable highlight. This achievement underscored our collective dedication and effort.

When it comes to cascading my values and approach to care, I’m passionate about discussing the importance of social care and unpaid carers. It often surprises me how those outside the sector may not fully understand these issues. Effective communication and education are key to advocating for change. Our Boutique care homes are actively involved in community events and outreach, focusing on educating the public about conditions such as dementia. We believe our values are best demonstrated through action. We want everyone who interacts with our team—and with me—to genuinely feel our care and commitment, rather than just hearing empty words.

To nurture and inspire the rising stars and future leaders within our team, I focus on empowering individuals and understanding their needs for progression. While it can be challenging to find time for in-depth conversations amidst a busy schedule, it’s well worth the effort. I’m consistently impressed by the range of projects and qualifications our colleagues pursue. Many innovative ideas and feel-good moments originate from our team members. These insights and contributions often wouldn’t have occurred to me without their input. The best results come from working together harmoniously, supporting each other to achieve greater heights.

“We encourage everyone to step up as leaders in their roles.”

In summary, leadership in social care is about more than guiding a team—it’s about creating an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute to a shared vision. At Boutique Care Homes, our commitment to nurturing talent, engaging with the community, and striving for excellence defines our approach. Leading such a dedicated team is a true honour, and I look forward to the future and the many achievements we will continue to accomplish together.

 boutiquecarehomes.co.uk



Ameet Kotecha
Founder
Boutique Care Homes



A specialist community for everyone in dementia care



Beth Britton

Beth Britton
Social Care Consultant and
dementia campaigner

Beth Britton, Social Care Consultant and dementia campaigner, shares her thoughts on the importance of a dedicated community for providers of dementia care.

If you provide dementia care and support, you'll know how specialist this area of work is. Dementia, of all types and stages, is highly complex. As specialists we need a toolbox of interventions and ideas that will provide the most holistic support possible. One way to broaden our knowledge of dementia is from other experts in our field, and an organisation aiming to facilitate this type of education and networking is Dementia Communityⁱ.

Dementia Community: Connecting you to dementia specialists from all disciplines

Under the motto of 'learning, sharing and inspiring', Dementia Community was formed as a Charitable Community Benefit Society in 2021 to provide a model for sustaining the Journal of Dementia Care (a multi-disciplinary bi-monthly publication established over 30 years ago) and in response to the negative impact of the pandemic on dementia care in the UK. The Community has a broad and growing membership of people living with dementia, family carers, care providers and researchers from all health and care disciplines, and has a strong focus on ensuring the voices of people from under-represented communities are heard (this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issue of the Journal of Dementia Care is one exampleⁱⁱ). Lifetime membership costs just £1 and provides a host of benefitsⁱⁱⁱ.

“Dementia Community was formed in response to the negative impact of the pandemic on dementia care.”

Learning from leaders in dementia care

Most of the learning offered by Dementia Community follows a 'little and often' approach. I host twice-monthly, free-to-attend 1-hour webinars that feature colleagues and/or people with lived experience sharing knowledge and resources to support our sector.

Previous webinars (which you can watch via Dementia Community's YouTube channel^{iv}) include:

- **The Montessori Way using Dementia Care Coaches**
- **Cognitive Stimulation Therapy for dementia**
- **Understanding equality, diversity & inclusion in dementia care**
- **Benefits of gardening and green spaces for people with dementia and providing year-round accessibility**
- **Risk assessments and using outside spaces**
- **An exploration of lies in communication with people who have dementia**
- **How to use objects as a superpower through Material Citizenship.**

I've learnt a huge amount about these topics from the speakers who've presented their work, including Dr Karan Jutla and Dr Kellyn Lee, and there are more learning opportunities ahead including webinars with Playlist for Life and The Validation Training Institute

In care settings

- ▶ **Nature empowerment**, allowing people with dementia to access outside when and how they would like- understanding of affinity for nature is important within this.
- ▶ **Nature enhanced activity**- if it can be done outside and the weather is good it probably should be, games, eating, socialising etc Activity and lifestyles approach.
- ▶ **Nature based activity**- access to nature based activity in line with persons occupational preference. Gardening, bird watching, walking, fishing etc



People living with dementia at the heart of Dementia Community

Some of the best learning I've facilitated in my career has come from people living with dementia, so Dementia Community has recently advertised the opportunity to present webinars to DEEP Groups in the hope of securing more speakers who are living with dementia.

Upcoming learning opportunities with people who have dementia that are already confirmed include Irene Donaldson joining Kate Gridley (University of York) to talk about the ground-breaking 'A Good Life with Dementia' course, and the 3 Nations Dementia Working Group talking about transport issues for people with dementia.

Keeping up to date with the latest news and events in the dementia sector

Dementia Community provides one of the most comprehensive feeds of dementia news on the internet. It's a mix of research, headline-grabbing announcements, opportunities to be involved in projects, newly released resources and films and much more.



Recently shared items of interest include:

- **The Dementia Innovators Programme**^{vii}
- **SCIE LGBTQ+ resources**^{viii}
- **DemCon**^{ix}
- **RCSLT new dementia guidance**^x
- **Film about sleep disturbances and Lewy body dementia**^{xi}

Also not-to-be-missed is the Dementia Community events listing with online and in-person events across the UK and abroad, including many that are free-of-charge.

Immerse yourself in learning at UK Dementia Congress

For a more immersive dementia learning experience, Dementia Community provide the 2-day UK Dementia Congress^{xiii}. Now in its 18th year, UK Dementia Congress is a multi-disciplinary event that brings people together from social care, healthcare and academia alongside individuals living with dementia and family carers. Hopefully I will see you there!

 **@bethyb1886**
 **bethbritton.com**

“Dementia Community provides one of the most comprehensive feeds of dementia news.”

^{vii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/

^{viii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/JDCSEPT23.pdf

^{ix}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/dementia-community-membership

^xyoutube.com/@journalofdementiacare

^{xi}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/events/webinars-2

^{xii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/category/news

^{xiii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/alzheimers-society-nhs-cep-innovators

^{xiv}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/scie-release-new-resources

^{xv}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/continence-care

^{xvi}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/rcslt-new-dementia-guidance

^{xvii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/film-about-sleep-disturbances

^{xviii}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/events

^{xix}journalofdementiacare.co.uk/events/uk-dementia-congress



How Skills for Care is supporting choice and control in social care



Holly Irwin
Head of Workforce Delivery
Skills for Care

Holly Irwin, Head of Workforce Delivery at Skills for Care, talks about how their organisation is prioritising the shift towards more personalised care.

Personalised care means that people have choice and control over the way that their care is planned and delivered. The concept is intended to ensure that people receive care that's based on their preferences.

This doesn't just involve a change in approach for staff who are directly supporting someone. It has implications for the leadership of organisations and how we commission social care, alongside people working in business support functions and our partner organisations.

Skills for Care is involved in a variety of initiatives that encourage the shift towards more choice and control for people drawing on care and support and I wanted to shine a light on what they are and how you can get involved.

The recently launched 'Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care'ⁱ, which Skills for Care helped develop in collaboration with the sector, complements and reinforces the NHS Long Term Planⁱⁱ and is intended to support the shared goals of our health and social care infrastructure, meaning it will have a big impact on how we shape choice and control in social care. Importantly, personalisation is noted in the Strategy as one of the primary drivers of our sector's need for change – 'Changing needs mean we will increasingly need an integrated workforce focusing on personalisation, prevention and wellbeing'.

The Strategy makes some important recommendations when it comes to personalisation, most notable in its support for individual employersⁱⁱⁱ. Self-directed care through employment of personal assistants is often recognised as the ultimate in personalisation as it gives the person being supported total control over who they employ and in what capacity. Use of direct payments and personal health budgets recognises the expertise that people have about their own care and support needs. That's why I think it's great to see the Strategy state that the Local Government Association (LGA) should develop a set of recommendations around supporting individual employers to manage their employment responsibilities, including access to resources such as legal advice, payroll services and human resources in line with the Care Act.

If adopted, this will make the lives of individual employers far easier and make personalised care far more accessible.

In addition to strategic initiatives, we've also been involved in the development of a qualification to support those who are actively commissioning care and support services, which has a strong focus on personalised care. The 'Principles of Commissioning for Wellbeing Level 5'^{iv} has been available for several years and was recently independently evaluated as having a positive impact on commissioning. It focuses heavily on the importance of co-production throughout the commissioning cycle, recognising the expertise of those drawing on care and support to create innovative and personalised care solutions.

One social care commissioner and course participant said:

"From what I've learnt about co-production and partnership (...) the principles and practices for commissioning for wellbeing, and just putting those in place really. This is the way you've got to do it, and because I'm starting from scratch, I'm trying to take responsibility for that. I never do anything without co-production now."

To this end, we also offer a national peer network for commissioners^v. This is a dedicated network for commissioners is based around feedback from commissioners. Activity includes masterclasses on topics relevant to commissioners, alongside peer networking and problem-solving events where we address issues such as personalisation.

Outside of course development and local networks, we also offer a great deal of free informational resources for commissioners^{vi} on our website. The information on this page is for commissioners working at all levels of adult social care and may also be of interest to children and young people and health commissioners.

 @skillsforcare
 Skillsforcare.org.uk

ⁱ[skillsforcare.org.uk/Workforce-Strategy/Home.aspx](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Workforce-Strategy/Home.aspx)

ⁱⁱ[longtermplan.nhs.uk](https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk)

ⁱⁱⁱ[skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Individual-employers/Individual-Employers.aspx](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Individual-employers/Individual-Employers.aspx)

^{iv}[skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Support-for-commissioners/Level-5-Commissioning-for-Wellbeing-Qualification.aspx](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Support-for-commissioners/Level-5-Commissioning-for-Wellbeing-Qualification.aspx)

^vevents.skillsforcare.org.uk/skillsforcare/frontend/reg/thomecsp?pageID=603299&eventID=1881&traceRedir=2

^{vi}<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Support-for-commissioners/Support-for-commissioners.aspx>

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A new wave in social care recruitment



Recruit2Care

Joe Desmond
Managing Director
Recruit2Care

Joe Desmond, Managing Director of Recruit2Care, outlines the growing importance of upskilling and internal promotion in social care to meet rising demands and create clear career pathways.

As the demand for quality social care continues to rise, companies within the sector are making sure they are clearing paths for progression by prioritising upskilling and promoting from within.

This inward-focused approach not only attracts new talent but also fosters loyalty from existing team members whilst enhancing overall service delivery. For many individuals either entering or already working in the care sector, knowing there is a clear path for progression is a significant motivator.

To join an organisation as a care assistant with the potential to work towards being a senior care assistant, deputy manager and manager is significant. Moreover, the opportunity to transition into ancillary and more specialised roles—like dementia care specialist or palliative care coordinator—adds another layer of appeal.

“Career progression is a major draw for people considering a role in social care,” says Joe Desmond, Managing Director at Recruit2Care. “When individuals see that they can grow within a company willing to invest in them they are more likely to commit long-term.”

Recruit2Care is collaborating with several forward-thinking companies that not only emphasise but invest in the importance of obtaining the Health and Social Care Level 3 Diploma. This occupational certification supports learners in their roles or in their career progression towards senior positions and specialised roles.

One positive example of this is in the use of digital care records. Now widely adopted to streamline administrative tasks, maintain continuity of care between day and night teams, and deliver person-centred care, advanced learning equips carers with the necessary skills to effectively utilise these digital tools. Additionally, technological interventions such as Virtual Reality (VR) are being used to deliver better dementia care, offering immersive experiences that enhance both patient outcomes and caregiver training. By integrating

these advanced technologies, care workers are not only improving the quality of care but also increasing their own proficiency and confidence in handling complex care scenarios. This blend of formal qualification and digital competency fosters a more adaptable and skilled workforce, capable of meeting the evolving demands of the social care sector.

Not all companies are willing to invest in their employees' education and training. However, for those that do support their staff in learning and career development the benefits are huge explains Joe; *“Employers see increased loyalty, higher commitment levels, and most importantly, improved service delivery as carers gain confidence and enhanced skills and knowledge.”*

As the social care sector continues to evolve, the emphasis on internal recruitment and upskilling is likely to grow. Organisations that recognise the value of their existing workforce and invest in their development are sure to be an appealing for those looking to work in the sector.

✉ joe@recruit2care.co.uk
🌐 recruit2care.co.uk

“Employers see increased loyalty and most importantly, improved service delivery.”

This month, we meet...

Each month we meet key stakeholders and business leaders in the social care sector. This month we meet Jade Kent, Senior Associate at Stephens Scown Solicitors. We caught up with Jade to discuss her passion for the healthcare sector, and how legal expertise can make a real difference for businesses and individuals in health and social care.

Jade, can you tell us about your work at Stephens Scown?

I work as a senior associate in the firm's Corporate team with a focus on the healthcare sector. Even as a trainee, I was doing work in the care sector, supporting a breach of contract claim in relation to a care home. The case went all the way to the Royal Courts of Justice.

Since joining Stephens Scown's specialist healthcare team, I've supported the huge growth of the sector within the company, and we continue to make great strides in working with those in the care field.

What does your work involve as part of the healthcare team?

My days are spent supporting healthcare businesses to buy and sell their assets, to refinance, restructure, and to sort out their governance. I'm also a key contact for care clients to help them access other services available at Stephens Scown too, such as regulatory, property, employment, and immigration. Having access to a whole range of expertise has been of great value to clients.

I also make sure I get out and meet people, and really integrate with others working in healthcare. I've been a guest on numerous podcasts, blogs, and attended conferences and events – both as guest and speaker. It's through these interactions that I can really get a feel for what's happening in the sector and understand what's important to those working in healthcare and how I can best support their endeavours.

Why is it important for readers in health and social care to work with legal experts?

There are several reasons why lawyers can help businesses and individuals from across health and social care.

1. To protect themselves first and foremost. We can help with any issues across a range of areas and ensure you're making the right decisions, both for yourself and your business if applicable.

2. To save time and money. For example lawyers can give you advice about the implications if you are looking to buy or sell a care home and can work with you to make sure the processes are followed to avoid delays, crucial if you're working within a short timescale. They also spot issues at an early stage to avoid a costly fix later on down the line.



Jade Kent
Senior Associate
Stephens Scown



3. To give peace of mind. We know that people often come to lawyers as a last resort or only at times of need. Our job is to provide clear guidance and lay out your options. Talking to us as soon as possible in a matter will help ensure you're armed with all the facts and prepared to move forward with a clear plan.

4. To access expert knowledge. Chances are, we've dealt with issues like yours on numerous occasions, so we're perfectly placed to help guide you through whatever challenge you're facing.

Given your work as a lawyer in health and social care, how do you champion the sector?

It's an area I'm hugely passionate about, and have led Stephens Scown's growth in the area, recognising the value it has in society. The firm is committed to supporting and working with our local communities – we're employee-owned and B Corp™ certified, which is the gold standard of ethical business, and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to balancing people, planet, and profit.

“My days are spent supporting healthcare businesses to buy and sell their assets, to refinance, restructure, and to sort out their governance.”

I'm a Championing Social Care Ambassador and recently volunteered at the annual ball. The events, conferences, blogs, and podcasts are another way I like to shout about the sector and raise awareness of the great work being done by people throughout health and social care.

I try to facilitate connections within the sector, whether that's care home clients to share ideas on recruitment and retention, data protection colleagues with a care software provider, or team up a social care consultant with a client who has sold up and moved on to new ventures.

Ultimately, I want to share the amazing work being carried out across the country and support in any way I can those who are making a difference.

[linkedin.com/in/jadekent/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jadekent/)

[linkedin.com/company/stephens-scown/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/stephens-scown/)

[stephens-scown.co.uk](https://www.stephens-scown.co.uk)

Key provisions in a locum agreement



hcrlaw

Manyara Matambanadzo, Solicitor in the Commercial Team at HCR Law, explains the essential clauses for a clear and secure locum agreement.

Despite locum arrangements providing a quick and flexible solution, unambiguous terms in contracts are key to ensure safeguards for both parties while guarding against any unplanned employment status determination. These terms include:

■ **Duration** – whilst employment contracts are generally ongoing, unless explicitly stated otherwise, contractor agreements expire upon completion of the job – therefore their end date should be clear.

■ **Status** – it is key to set out the working status of the locum, who will be engaged as a self-employed consultant, not an employee. So reflecting the intended legal relationship between the parties is imperative.

■ **Termination** – covering the amount of notice required, the obligation(s) of both parties on termination, for example return of equipment by the locum, and how disputes will be resolved. Death or incapacitation of the locum may also be covered.

■ **Substitution clause** – permitting the locum to provide a substitute to carry out the services in their place. It is helpful to allow appointment of substitutes at any time, not simply when the locum is unable to perform.

■ **NI and tax payment** – stating that the locum is undertaking the work in a self-employed capacity and agrees to meet their own NICs, income and other taxes arising from the income.

■ **Non-solicitation** – stopping the locum from influencing, encouraging or attempting to persuade clients which they have been introduced to during their course of engagement. These clauses also seek to stop the locum from leaving with them and taking their business elsewhere.

■ **Payment terms** – this may cover invoicing, method and frequency of payment and how travel, mileage and expense will be dealt with. Your agreement will also need to outline exactly how payment will be structured.

■ **Obligations** – regarding the locum, factors like the scope of work covered, nature of services to be delivered and whether any licenses need to be obtained could all be considered.

Full consideration of locum terms should always be at the forefront of your mind if you or your practice are considering engaging locums. Such agreements can avoid disputes or challenges later in the relationship. Clearly drafted and reviewed terms are essential to solidify the intentions of both parties.



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