

# CareTalk

The voice of excellence in social care

Let's Talk Social Care! Issue **124** | September **2023**

# Thinking Outside The Box



## In This Issue:



**THE ROLE OF  
CO-PRODUCTION  
IN DIGITAL  
EMPOWERMENT**  
**Clenton Farquharson**  
CBE  
Co-chair,  
TEC Action Alliance,  
Chair,  
Think Local Act Personal



**BUILDING  
INTER-  
GENERATIONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS**  
**Shaleeza Hasham**  
Founder and CEO,  
Adopt a Grandparent



**INTRODUCING  
THE VOLUNTARY  
CARE PROFESSIONAL  
REGISTER**  
**Liz Blaclock**  
CEO,  
National Association of Care  
and Support Workers



**WHAT KEEPS ME  
AWAKE AT NIGHT**  
**Peter Kinsey**  
Chief Executive and Chair,  
Iris Care Group

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■ GOING GLOBAL: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES? ■ HOUSING WITH CARE

## Circulation List

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

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

### Welcome to the September issue of Care Talk.

At the time of writing, the Lionesses' have sadly been defeated in the Women's World Cup final. Despite the disappointment there's no denying that Manager, Sarina Weigman's heroic and unwavering decisions have propelled the team to the top of their game, changing the landscape of women's football.

Another landscape that is set to change is social care. We are entering a digital revolution, with significant technology adoption across the sector, but to ensure future demands are addressed and results are enhanced for individuals, we must continue to embrace innovation and think outside the box.

**Thinking Outside the Box** is the theme for this month and in this issue our diverse range of contributors explore and highlight creative, innovative and unconventional approaches that are transforming social care.

One great example of this is the Care Innovation Challenge, from the National Care Forum, **A creative weekend of high energy collaboration for social care innovation**. This annual event aims to challenge traditional boundaries, generate new ideas and trail prototypes to transform social care. Turn to page 14 to find out more.

Challenging the traditional role of digital care is something that Clenton Farquharson, Chair of Think Local Act Personal, is passionate about. According to Clenton the role of digital care should extend beyond just ensuring safety and should also be about enabling individuals to lead fulfilling lives. In his article, **Co-producing solutions for the future of social care**, page 8, Clenton explores how the sector can use technology more efficiently to allow people to lead, 'gloriously ordinary lives.'

**Thinking Outside the Box** to raise the profile and status of the frontline workforce, is the inspiration behind the new Voluntary Care Professional Register (VCPR), and something that Care Talk is proud to be supporting. The VCPR has been developed to recognise the professionalism and dedication of social care professionals in England. Turn to page 24, to find out how this initiative is **Enhancing the provision of social care through voluntary registration**.

The job of a care worker is a varied one to say the least, and **Thinking Outside the Box**, is all part and parcel of this role. We are seeing abundant examples of this in the nominations for this Autumn's programme of care awards. Turn to page 47, **Care Talk on the Road**, for details of our upcoming events.

Happy reading

Lisa





# A 3 IN 1 EVENT

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# Thinking outside the box

**These are extremely challenging times for the social care sector, and we have to think differently about what we do and how we can improve our efficiency and deliver better outcomes, often with fewer resources. Social care is on a burning platform, and it is incumbent upon us all to think about how we ensure that the services we provide, which are vital to the people we support, are maintained and developed. Nothing should stand still, and we have to think creatively about how we craft services that are fit for the future.**

We are fortunate that we have this burning platform at a time when we see the rise of technology, and there are new and innovative systems that can really make a difference to the care sector. That is not to say we do not recognise this is a person-centred sector, but there are so many things that we currently do manually that if we harnessed the value of technology, we could do so much more efficiently. I am also of the view that whenever we consider new technology, we should be really clear about what it is going to achieve. I think there should be three distinct measures to enable us to decide what technology works for the sector. The first is the person's experience. How does the person using this service get a better experience due to technology? Does technology give people more choice, autonomy and control in their lives, and does it give them more power to control their own decisions? Secondly, we must be clear that this technology delivers some tangible outcome. These could be in social care, medical, or quality of life, but there has to be some improvement delivered by the advent of technology. Thirdly, I want to see technology that improves the efficiencies within the care sector. I was always disappointed that our sector did not

***“Our sector cannot allow lazy commissioning to be the excuse for lazy provision.”***

embrace the productivity challenge when it was set by the Government, but we do need to recognise that with a staffing crisis, we have to improve our productivity levels where possible.

Technology is only one way where we could think more creatively about how the sector works. The enormous challenges of getting staff

into a sector also need some creative thought if we are going to solve this enormous problem. I think we need to look at many groups who currently are not in our workforce and try to attract them into careers in social care. Many ex-carers or semi-retired people would love to have a role in social care if only our employment practices were flexible. In future, we need to think about career structures but also acknowledge that people may want to dip in and out of a career in social care, and we must ensure our systems are as flexible as possible to encourage these people back into the workforce.



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



Over the years, I think there has been a degree of lazy commissioning by local authorities, which could also account for the fact that there has been little movement in the development of new services. Our sector cannot allow lazy commissioning to be the excuse for lazy provision, and we have got to see creative and innovative ways of delivering care. In many areas, there are significant numbers of people supporting somebody living with dementia in their own homes, and there is an opportunity for residential care services to become the hub for the management of dementia and other long-term conditions. I would like to see the development of new services available to residents in care homes and people in the local community. If we get this right, we not only deliver a range of new services, but we also create a connection with the local community, which will also help us when we have vacancies in our residential care services.

There are some real gaps in service, which I believe we could be responding to. There are increasing number of people living with dementia who have behaviours that challenge nocturnal patterns of life. Our sector needs to think about how it can craft some night support services and emergency respite provision so that carers are properly supported and can look after people much longer at home.

These are challenging times, but if the sector is on the front foot and leading the charge with innovative and creative new ideas, and if the sector embraces technology and the use of data for planning purposes, I believe we will have a bright and long-term future.

[@ProfMartinGreen](#) [@CareEngland](#)





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# Digital empowerment: Co-producing solutions for the future of social care



**Clenton Farquharson CBE**  
Co-chair, TEC Action Alliance  
Chair, Think Local Act Personal (TLAP)

**There's a problem with how we talk about technology in the care sector. I read about apps and widgets that remind people to take their medication, monitor their vital signs and send an alert if someone falls. This is important work. But what I don't hear is how digital care is helping people to lead gloriously ordinary lives.**

Where are the stories about devices amplifying human connection, fostering inclusivity and helping people to do the things they love?

Yes, I want to know that digital care keeps individuals safe and secure, but it can do so much more. We need to paint a richer picture, so more people engage with technology. How can it help them to feel recognised and valued? How does it allow individuals to find freedom and dignity, belonging and purpose?

I believe that digital care has a vital part to play in supporting people to lead great lives. But its role must be a backseat, enabling one. Human relationships are the driver in care, not boxes of kit. Sure, those boxes can join up services, reduce admin and provide monitoring but they do that so we can spend more time on the interactions and passions that help us thrive, not just survive.

***“A lack of meaningful involvement can result in devices being inappropriate, unwanted and unused.”***

So, how can the care sector use digital technology more effectively, so people get good lives, not just good services? I believe there are some foundations that providers can put in place.

## Offer web access to all

So much of our world is digital that access should be seen as a basic service – like water or power. People who draw on care and support are being excluded from opportunities, information and services if they can't get online and this is something care providers must consider – particularly their role and responsibility.

Digital access can no longer be viewed as a nice to have – it needs to be threaded through care and support. Challenges around digital literacy and Wi-Fi connectivity must be addressed early and properly resourced.

## Challenge stereotypes

People who are older or disabled often have things done to them. They can be typecast as passive recipients rather than individuals with autonomy and agency who are experts in their own lives and can think for themselves.

When it comes to technology, these stereotypes abound. I regularly hear that older people 'don't like tech', which just isn't true. During lockdown, I helped my 85-year-old mum use a mobile phone. Once the grandkids installed her favourite apps and talked her through everything, we couldn't get her off it. Like lots of people in later life, she just wasn't familiar with technology before.

If you find out what people are interested in and give them the right support, their skills and confidence will grow.

## Co-produce digital care

When you're procuring devices, share decision-making with the people who'll be using them. This might sound obvious, but digital solutions are often bought by managers and then presented to individuals or care workers. A lack of meaningful involvement can result in devices being inappropriate, unwanted and unused.

It really pays to get co-production right. For help getting started, download this free guide<sup>1</sup> from the TEC Action Alliance, a wide-ranging group of care organisations putting co-production at the heart of digital care.

I co-chair the alliance with Alyson Scurfield at the TEC Services Association (TSA) and our mission is to ensure the voice of people is at the forefront of care technology. We're working with researchers and speaking to individuals to identify what they want from digital care and our recommendations on how to accelerate the adoption of TEC and ensure everyone can lead a technology-enabled life will be published in the new year.

[tec-action.org.uk](https://tec-action.org.uk)

<sup>1</sup>[https://tec-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Getting-Started-in-Co-Production\\_v02-SINGLEPAGES.pdf](https://tec-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Getting-Started-in-Co-Production_v02-SINGLEPAGES.pdf)



*“Where are the stories  
about devices amplifying  
human connection?”*





# AI in social care: A bot on the landscape or a smarter solution for the sector?



Sheffield  
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UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

**Praminda Caleb-Solly**

Professor of Embodied Intelligence  
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**The significant advances in the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence, particularly when embedded in robotic platforms, have potential to transform social care provision and address some of the current challenges.**

This article briefly explores the opportunities that the integration of robotics and AI in social care offer to transform healthcare delivery, enhance individual autonomy, and improve quality of life. Careful attention must be given to ethical, social, and economic considerations to ensure the successful and responsible implementation of these technologies.





## **What is the role of robotics and AI in social care provision?**

Traditional assistive devices and digital technologies often can't accommodate diverse and changing user needs, leading to user abandonment. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms with smart sensors into robotic platforms offers potential for personalisation and adaptability. Learning and detecting changes in behaviour and the environment can enable informed decision-making and dynamic adjustments in care provision. The goal is to enhance responsiveness by anticipating and facilitating appropriate care in a timely manner.

It is important to emphasise that robotics and AI should not be viewed as substitutes for human caregivers. The human touch, empathy, and emotional support provided by caregivers are invaluable and irreplaceable. The ideal future lies in striking a balance that combines the strengths of intelligent robotics technologies with the compassionate care of humans, creating a holistic and person-centred social care system.

## **What opportunities and challenges exist in the current climate for robotics and AI in social care?**

Robotics and AI technologies in social care have the potential to empower individuals, augment human caregivers, and address the shortage of healthcare professionals. For instance, robotic exoskeletons and powered wheelchairs assist individuals with mobility impairments, enhancing independence and quality of life.

IoT-enabled intelligent robots and wearables can collect and analyse data on vital signs, sleep patterns, and activity levels, providing diagnostic information and monitoring capabilities to healthcare professionals. Robotic devices that assist with physically demanding tasks can alleviate strain and reduce the risk of injuries for caregivers, but further research is required to determine the additional skills necessary for proficient use of these technologies.

However, deploying robotics and AI in social care comes with challenges. Ethical considerations such as dependency on technology, data ownership, privacy, and security must be addressed. Building trust and acceptance among caregivers and care recipients is crucial. Moreover, the cost of implementing and maintaining these technologies, ensuring sustainability, and managing potential job displacement or changes in roles are important factors to navigate. It is critical to provide appropriate training to prepare the future workforce for collaboration with these technologies and understand the impact on roles and relationships in the care setting.

*“Robotics and AI should not be viewed as substitutes for human caregivers.”*

*“Robotics and AI will bring us closer to realising virtual care and telehealth solutions.”*

## **What are the benefits for providers, the workforce, and people in receipt of care?**

The potential benefit is to enhance independence and personalised care, while mitigating social disparities in future developments. Robotics and AI will bring us closer to realising virtual care and telehealth solutions where continuous high-quality care can be provided to a wider population. Providers can improve efficiency and increase capacity to serve a larger population. Our workforce will have opportunities for upskilling and new roles alongside these technologies.

## **How will this technology change the social care landscape and what do you think this will look like in 5-10 years and beyond?**

These disruptive technologies will require significant transformations in health and social services, including care pathways, systemic and organisational changes in delivery, funding, and the integration of AI technologies for daily living support. Intelligent companions and assistive devices will become more common for self-management of long-term conditions. With advancements in regenerative medicine, gene therapy, AI, and smart sensing, there are promising prospects for disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. While these technologies hold great opportunities in addressing current challenges faced by a resource-strained healthcare system, it is crucial to prioritise human dignity and support at times of vulnerability and frailty, ensuring they remain central to the care received.

Alessandro Di Nuovo is Professor of Machine Intelligence at Sheffield Hallam University and PI of the EPSRC project IMACTIVE: Intelligent Multimodal Assessment and Coaching Through Identification of Vulnerabilities in Older People <https://www.shu.ac.uk/advanced-wellbeing-research-centre/projects/im-active>

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# A call for innovation and lifelong learning



Lancaster University

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**The challenges faced by the adult social care sector are no secret and, with demographic change, the demand for high-quality care services continues to grow.**

However, the latest figures from Skills for Care reveal a glimmer of hope, with a slight reduction in care worker vacancies. While this is undoubtedly a welcome development, it is essential not to overlook the significant recruitment and retention problems that persist. Currently, the adult social care sector grapples with a vacancy rate of 9.9%, resulting in a staggering 152,000 unfilled positions. This pressing issue affects the quality of care provided and puts immense strain on existing workers.

***“LAPIS has collaborated with European partners to develop research-based responses to the sector’s challenges.”***

One initiative that has made significant strides in understanding and tackling the workforce crisis is the Learning for Adult Social Care Practice Innovation and Skills (LAPIS) project, led by a team at Lancaster University. LAPIS has collaborated with European partners, including Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Cyprus, and Greece, to develop research-based responses to the sector’s challenges.

Notably, LAPIS discovered adult social care is facing a crisis not just in the UK but across all partner countries. The recruitment challenges are alarmingly similar, regardless of the geographic location. This points to the urgency and global relevance of the solutions that need to be implemented to revolutionise the sector.

Central to LAPIS’ approach has been a focus on the needs of managers in partner countries. Through engagements with more than 600 representatives from the care sector, the project identified the pressing need for comprehensive staff development programmes, tailored to cater to the unique requirements of both care users and care workers. Moreover, LAPIS highlighted the importance of structures of professional recognition to improve the status of care workers within the sector. Such recognition empowers workers, fosters motivation, and, ultimately, enhances the quality of care provided. However, the project also discovered that barriers, both structural, social, and cultural, exist acting as barriers to innovation within the sector.

Staff training is essential in making care workers feel valued and increasing retention rates. Unfortunately, staffing shortages often hinder organisations from providing adequate training opportunities. Where there is training offered, we found many care workers took the same training year after year due to a lack of options.

In response to this, LAPIS worked collaboratively with employers and educators to develop a range of free resources aimed at assisting managers in designing and implementing customised work-based learning packages for their organisations.

The comprehensive suite of resources includes short modules covering the following areas: creating own work-based learning programme; leadership in work-based learning; and promoting innovation in care. These are accompanied by a digital map and user-friendly guidebook, highlighting successful work-based learning practices in the social care industry, covering planning and development. Accessible via Lancaster University’s Open Learn Platform or LAPIS website, these resources offer invaluable support for the care sector.

Beyond addressing training needs, LAPIS also explored innovation in social care, unearthing a significant issue: leaders and managers tend to associate innovation solely with invention and are often unaware of the innovations taking place within their own organisations. This lack of recognition hinders the sharing of successful practices, stalling progress in the sector. To bridge this gap, LAPIS developed an innovative app that allows users to read, upload and share innovation stories from the sector, ultimately stimulating a culture of innovation within the adult social care sector.

As the LAPIS project nears its conclusion, its deliverables remain as a freely available beacon of hope for the future of adult social care. By investing in lifelong learning and promoting innovation, the sector can overcome the pressing challenges it faces today and lay the foundation for a thriving future.







## Join the National Care Forum

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- NCF will be ensuring that the voice and experience of members influence the critical social care reform agenda, advocating for experience led change with the Secretary of State, Minister and senior policy makers
- NCF members are supportive, collaborative, connected organisations
- NCF are strategic leaders in Digital Social Care and have dedicated digital transformation staff to support your digital transformation journey
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NCF works directly with not for profit care & support providers across the UK supporting members to improve social care provision & enhance the quality of life, choice, control & well-being of people who use care services.



# A creative weekend of high energy collaboration for social care



**Professor Vic Rayner OBE**  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Care Forum

*“Sector experts and people with lived experience came together to provide mentorship to budding entrepreneurs.”*

**Following another Care Innovation Challenge weekend filled with high energy collaboration in the name of social care innovation, we are still energised and so grateful for everyone’s time and contributions.**

The Care Innovation Challenge weekend, a hackathon-style creative weekend of idea generation and prototype trialling for social care, took place on a weekend at the beginning of July at Coventry University’s Technocentre.

The weekend, which has been running since 2018, brought together leading experts in the sector and people with lived experience to provide mentorship to budding entrepreneurs to focus on innovations that have the potential to transform social care, improving outcomes for people. Representatives from the regulatory and policy world also attended to provide





added perspectives. The event was made possible thanks to the continuing help and sponsorship of the Care Innovation Hub partners, RWK Goodman, Person Centred Software, Marngo, Home Instead, Hilton Nursing Partners, Coventry University, Community Integrated Care, Care Management Matters, Care Friends and Borough Care, who all supported the teams' idea generation and will continue to provide mentoring support for the winning teams.

The culmination of the weekend was the selection of five teams to present their ideas at The Care Show, the largest care event in the UK, on 11th-12th October at the NEC in Birmingham. The teams selected for the final picked up on all the core challenges facing social care - supporting the workforce, promoting independence, addressing isolation, getting data to support prevention and ensuring transparency around costs.

- 1. Team Careberry's innovation is focused on Smart Care Cost, an add-on to care planning so care providers can estimate costs to deliver a service for an individual.**
- 2. Team Kit to Live's innovation is an assessment tool, via an app, to enable video assessments by an Occupational Therapist (OT) to recommend physical aids for rehabilitation and to reduce OT assessment waiting times.**
- 3. Team Night Safety's innovation is an alert app for people with chronic health conditions to help them manage their medication.**
- 4. Team Tresacare's innovation is a wellbeing app which allows people to earn rewards for taking part in wellbeing gyms.**
- 5. Team Wellpal's innovation is an app to create intergenerational links between older people and students looking to volunteer.**

Each of the semi-finalists receive ongoing mentoring and £500 per team. The winning team will receive £1,000 in prize money, media coverage and further mentoring to develop their idea.

Representatives from partners Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), through their National Co-production Advisory Group (NCAG), attended the Challenge and will continue to support the finalists in developing their innovations, ensuring that people with lived experience are an integral part of creating solutions.

Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE, TLAP's Chair and Challenge mentor, said, "People who draw on care and support should be at the forefront. Participants can come in with a fixed mindset for an idea and one of my roles is to try help them see the bigger picture, asking have they thought what this might mean for people accessing care and support."

Everyone working in the sector, and those receiving support, will feel the benefits in the future from the idea generation the Care Innovation Challenge is nurturing right now. We can't wait to see how the ideas progress.

**"Five teams will present their ideas at The Care Show on 11th - 12th October."**



For more information about the Care Innovation Challenge visit <https://careinnovationhub.org.uk/challenge/>

# Innovating by design: Transforming supported housing



Sanctuary  
Supported  
Living

**Kelly Miller**

Head of Assistive Technology  
and Programmes  
Sanctuary Supported Living

**Assistive technology is nothing new. But often, it can be challenging to visualise what types of devices encompass the breadth of it. In an ageing population, it might be tempting to think of assistive technology in its simplest form which features a button on a necklace that an older person can press in case of emergency – but contrary to stereotypical beliefs, assistive technology is so much more than that.**

*“Alongside our in-home technology, we can support customers when they are outside the home.”*

At Sanctuary Supported Living, our range of extraordinarily adaptable technology enabled living products are designed to support anyone to live healthy, happy, and independent lives.

Whilst the idea of assistive technology is not new, what has changed is the rate at which technology is progressing, and cutting-edge, smart devices in the home are now readily available for a broad range of purposes. This has been game-changing for the way we deliver care and support services, and bridge the gap for so many marginalised and isolated people who are unable to lead a fulfilling life – whether those people are indeed elderly, or they have a disability, or they're experiencing homelessness, or they have mental health needs.

As we ambitiously drive innovation with inclusion in mind, our technology enabled living services are significantly enhancing people's lives in every support setting by complementing personalised support plans. And as we use assistive technology as part of a whole-person, holistic approach, we're transforming the way that support services are delivered. At the heart of Sanctuary Supported Living is our commitment to support customers to be their best, and our priority is to have meaningful conversations with customers to find out what matters to them.



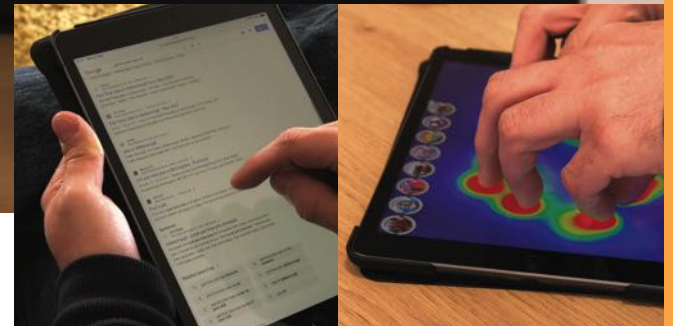




For one customer, John, who could only look at the pictures in his fishing magazine, this meant being able to actually read about the roaches that he caught from the river in his spare time. So, the enablement service in which he lives facilitated a pilot for a state-of-the-art reading pen, designed to support independent reading. Since John has been using the pen, he enjoys confidently reading his fishing magazine for the first time, which has boosted his confidence and spurred an interest to attend college.

Alongside our in-home technology, we can support customers when they are outside the home too – like Craig, who lives at a learning disability service in Sheffield and has epilepsy. When Craig had a seizure down the local pub, hospitality staff were quick to activate his GPS locating device so that our in-house, 24/7 call monitoring and technology installation service could be alerted, and an ambulance called.

So, there is still an element of using traditional personal risk monitoring devices for customers' security and safety. But also, we're firmly advancing into a new space where our customers – and especially our young customers – are using 'off the shelf' technology like smart phones which enhance support by providing apps that can be used for wellbeing, nutrition, budgeting, banking, and safely staying in touch with friends and family. These solutions not only support customers with



***“Our technology enabled living services are truly life-changing and lifesaving.”***

their natural independence but expertly provide multiple and individually considered solutions to suit them.

As well as providing safety devices and initiating proactive wellbeing calls - in between, we also design accommodation with innovative kitchen features like accessible rise and fall worktops to encourage customers in wheelchairs to safely push their limits, or provide lone-worker devices for frontline staff who may be at risk. And we do this with one goal in mind; to enable people to live confidently, safely, and independently in their homes and communities.

Put simply, we're innovating by design to transform supported housing, and our technology enabled living services are truly life-changing and lifesaving.

# Ground-breaking collaboration in dementia research



**It's been an incredibly exciting time in dementia research; after 20 years without any new Alzheimer's drugs in the UK, there are now two potential new drugs in just twelve months. This breakthrough could mark the beginning of the end of Alzheimer's disease.**

The results suggest that this treatment - called Donanemab - has the potential to slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease, giving people more time to engage in everyday activities and tasks and maintain their independence for longer.

The news has brought hope for the future, but there is still much to be done. While searching for treatments, we must also keep momentum in exploring ways to provide help to those currently living with dementia, right here and now. Life with dementia can come with challenges. Alongside care and support for families, we believe innovation can help people to live well with dementia by taking on these challenges together.

That's why we invest in innovative products, designed to help people living with dementia. In 2022, Alzheimer's Society launched the Longitude Prize on Dementia in partnership with Innovate UK and Challenge Works. Care Tech Foundation, one of the UK's leading specialist social care and education providers, helps fund the prize.

The Longitude Prize on Dementia is a £4 million prize to drive the creation of personalised, technology-based tools that are co-created with people who are living with the early stages of dementia.

Its aim is to help them live independent, more fulfilled lives and to be able to do the things they enjoy.

The Longitude Prize has so far awarded nearly £2m to 24 semi-finalists to develop tools aimed at aiding people living with dementia. Among the innovations are an app that facilitates communication, high-tech facial recognition glasses to identify familiar faces, and an augmented reality 'Wizard of Oz'-inspired 'Yellow Brick Road' map designed to help individuals navigate their surroundings safely. These ground-breaking developments hold great promise in enhancing the lives of those affected by dementia.

The competition itself has been co-designed with people living with dementia. Judges were advised in their decision making by the prize's Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP). Trevor Salomon, whose wife Yvonne was

*"The Longitude Prize on Dementia drives the creation of personalised, technology-based tools."*



diagnosed with young-onset Alzheimer's disease in 2013, is the panel's Chair. The group – which includes people living with dementia, carers and former carers – has steered the design of the prize, as well as the judging and assessment processes.

Existing products for people living with dementia often focus on safeguarding, monitoring, and risk-mitigation. These can be very useful, but there are currently very few solutions available that enable and empower people living with dementia to keep doing the things that are important to them and bring them joy. Moreover, with the progressive nature of dementia, one of the key focuses of the prize is to ensure that the solutions that are awarded funding are able to adapt to a person's condition over time, providing support that grows as a person's abilities to live independently decline.



*“Every aspect of our work is guided by the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of dementia.”*

The shortlisted innovators, whose ideas were assessed by a panel of people living with dementia as well as expert judges are able to test their ideas in a real-world environment and ensure that they fully take in to account the particular needs of those requiring specialist social care support, through access to CareTech's social care experts. This ground-breaking collaboration marks the first of its kind in this space.

The overall Longitude Prize on Dementia winner will be announced in 2026, receiving a £1 million prize. This collaboration ensures that every idea adds value to the field of dementia research. The combined efforts of these innovative minds, together with the unique support of CareTech Foundation, are poised to make a meaningful impact on the dementia space.

Challenge prizes like Longitude open up problem-solving to a wider and more diverse pool of people, such as small businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs, allowing for more flexibility and bold new ideas.

CareTech, the Foundation and Alzheimer's Society are dedicated to ensuring that every aspect of our work is guided by the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of dementia. We value the uniqueness and relevance of each individual's experience and recognise the significance of engaging a diverse range of perspectives from those who face the realities of dementia daily. Through sharing their knowledge, skills, experiences, opinions, and ideas, people with lived experience of dementia play a pivotal role in helping us make better decisions, create a more significant impact, and become a stronger force for positive change.

It's crucial that people living with dementia can live independently, doing things that bring them fulfilment, for as long as possible. That is exactly what tech innovation can provide. We can't wait to see how these products develop during the course of the Longitude Prize, and the benefits they'll bring to people living with dementia. In CareTech's care services, the staff supporting these individuals will be given a voice and platform to share their knowledge.

Together, we are paving the way towards a better, brighter future for dementia. This is an exciting time for us to revolutionise the way dementia is treated.

# Celebrating Professional Care Workers' Week 2023



**Karolina Gerlich**  
CEO  
The Care Workers Charity

**The Care Workers' Charity proudly presents "Professional Care Workers' Week 2023," a celebration of those who care for others. This event marks the sixth consecutive year of the initiative. It aims to shed light on the invaluable contributions made by care workers while advocating for their recognition as skilled professionals.**

*"The funds raised during these activities will directly support care workers facing difficult times."*

Even though our primary mission is that of a benevolent fund, we also do a lot of campaigning. We actively campaign for care workers' rights, striving to improve their working conditions and social standing. Through a multifaceted approach, we demand better funding for the care sector and urge fairer wages for care workers as a national expectation.

Society has often erroneously perceived care workers' skills as "soft skills," underestimating the complexity and depth required for this profession. However, as a former care worker, I know first-hand that compassion, empathy and patience are just as important as the clinical and organisational skills that care workers possess. It takes a nuanced blend of all these attributes to excel in the caregiving field and provide top-quality support to those who draw on social care.

Recognising the significance of care workers' dedication and competence, The Care Workers' Charity believes that care workers deserve a dedicated celebration every year, just like any other profession dedicated to the service of others. With a heartfelt understanding of their efforts and struggles, we strive to raise awareness and appreciation for their vital role and contribution to society.

From the 18th to the 22nd of September, we will host an engaging and informative program of panels and sessions. The sessions will be delivered by care workers and care managers, along with influential figures from the Adult Social Care sector. Thanks to the virtual format, these talks will be accessible to attendees from anywhere across the UK, and participation is entirely free.

We encourage everyone, both within and outside the sector, to actively take part in the event. Every effort counts, whether by attending the talks, raising funds, or hosting individual celebrations to honour their colleagues. On Thursday, we are asking people to host Afternoon Tea for CWC. This can be a virtual meetup with your friends or colleagues over a cup of tea or a big tea party in your care home, home care office, or other care services. And you can join the all-day walk along the South Downs on Friday. The funds raised during these activities will directly support care workers, providing crisis grants and counselling services to those facing difficult times.

To learn more about Professional Care Workers' Week 2023 and join in the celebration, visit the official website of The Care Workers' Charity at:

<https://www.thecareworkerscharity.org.uk/professional-care-workers-week-2023-2/>.

Let's make Professional Care Workers' Week 2023 a memorable event highlighting the skills of care workers and their indispensable role in our society.

*"We will be hosting an engaging and informative program of panels and sessions."*





# A Week Celebrating Care Workers

## Professional Care Workers' Week 2023

18th - 22nd September

Celebrate  
Care  
Workers

Network

Attend  
Panels

Fundraise

### MONDAY 18TH SEPT

**THE WHY?**  
10am

**THE HOW?**  
12 noon

**THE WHO?**  
2pm

**THE WHEN?**  
4pm

**Why do we care?**

Why is social care so undervalued in our society and how can we change it?

Why is being a care worker a vocation for people of any background but also not a job that just anybody can do?

Why are values so important?

How can we do things differently and challenge the usual practice?

How can we address 'Workforce wellbeing and enablement'-one of the quality statements in the new CQC framework that relates to caring about and promoting the wellbeing of care workers and, in turn, enabling them to deliver person-centred care?

How else can we support care workers?

Who are the care workers of the future?

Who are the future leaders and how to support them?

Who are apprenticeships suitable for and how to access them?

Who has the best idea of getting young people into social care?

When things go right, how to show appreciation?

When things go wrong, how to deal with it?

When you can see people burn out how to address it sensitively?

**TUESDAY**  
19th SEPT

**WEDNESDAY**  
20TH SEPT

**THURSDAY**  
21ST SEPT

**FRIDAY**  
22nd SEPT

Round Tables on the Social Care Workforce and it's Future

10-12noon  
Sector Leaders  
2-4pm  
Care Workers

1pm  
Live  
Wellbeing Webinar



All Day  
Fundraiser  
Afternoon Tea  
For CWC



All Day  
Fundraiser  
South Downs  
Charity Trek



For more information or to sign up visit our website at [www.thecareworkerscharity.org.uk](http://www.thecareworkerscharity.org.uk) or email [ayasha@thecwc.org.uk](mailto:ayasha@thecwc.org.uk)

# Uniting voices for care: Introducing Yorkshire and Humber's new care alliance



**Mike Padgham**

Co-Founder  
The Yorkshire and The Humber Care  
Association Alliance

**With social care in crisis and politicians slow to act, Mike Padgham, Chair of the Independent Care Group, says the need for new alliances and for presenting a unified voice has never been greater.**

It's time for social care providers to come together, speak out and fight for a better deal.

Social care providers and those we care for have never had the strongest of voices and as a result have always been at the back of the queue when it comes to reform and the provision of adequate funding.

A new alliance of care provider groups in Yorkshire and The Humber is leading the way towards ending that and giving social care the unified voice it needs as the sector continues to struggle against inadequate funding, ongoing staffing shortages and the rising cost of living.

The Yorkshire and The Humber Care Association Alliance comprises Barnsley Independent Care Home Providers Association, Bradford Care Association, Hull and East Riding Care Association, The Independent Care Group (North Yorkshire and York), Kirklees Care Association, Leeds Care Association, Sheffield Care Association and Wakefield (Independent Sector Liaison Group).

Each represents dozens of individual care providers, from the private and not-for-profit sectors.

The Alliance is in turn a member of the national Care Association Alliance. Myself and James Creegan, CEO and Chair of the Kirklees Care Association, as board members, are proud to speak up for Yorkshire and The Humber on this influential national body.

*“The Alliance is giving social care the unified voice it needs as the sector continues to struggle.”*

The membership of the Yorkshire and The Humber alliance recently signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding, bringing our organisations closer together for the benefit of all care providers in our region and the thousands of people who rely on us for their care and quality of life.

The Memorandum and our representation on the national Care Association Alliance cements us as the only recognised, official representative care body for the Yorkshire and The Humber region.

At this time, when social care is under such unrelenting and unprecedented pressure, it is vital that we speak with a united voice and fight together for improvements to social care.

We look forward to adding more organisations and building this regional voice for social care providers and those who receive care. We would urge other associations across the country to join together and raise your voices in this way. We will bring the worries, issues and challenges facing social care providers to the attention of regional and national decision-makers and lobby for actions that will improve the sector.

The four principles that underpin our Memorandum are that we will strive to give people dignity and a good quality of life, to work together and support each other towards that aim, to work with integrity and to work with courage, to challenge the status quo.

The Alliance's overall aim is to provide leadership, help, support and advice to its membership, share best practice and work with care commissioners, including local authorities and NHS bodies and other partners to improve the quality of life of those living with a care need. It will work on things like improving fees for providers, helping providers get access to training for staff, informing regional and national care policy by sharing information and trends, lobbying and building greater awareness of social care and care providers.

Above all, the new Alliance will speak up for social care, fearlessly arguing for improvement in the sector and lobbying government for a better deal.



*“We would urge other associations across the country to join together and raise your voices in this way.”*



# Introducing the Voluntary Care Professional Register:

## Enhancing the provision of social care through voluntary registration



**Liz Blacklock**

CEO  
National Association of Care  
and Support Workers

**Advocates in England have long pushed for a register for care professionals, that enhances accountability and professionalism within the sector. Inspired by the successful NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) registration system, a focus group, including prominent organizations like the National Association of Care and Support Workers (NACAS) and the Institute of Health and Social Care Management (IHSCM), is currently working on this transformative initiative.**

*“The VCPR heralds a new era of accountability, professionalism, and recognition.”*

### What's been happening?

A comprehensive survey has been undertaken to gather insights and perspectives from individuals living with or working in social care. The aim is to understand expectations and preferences of to help shape the register. Through a social media campaign, 630 care stakeholders responded. People were categorised into one of the following segments:

- **Experts by experience (e.g. service user, family member or friend)**
- **Care Manager/Provider**
- **Deputy Manager/Team Leader/Carer**
- **NHS/Commissioner/Regulator**
- **Other Stakeholder**

### What did the survey tell us?

#### Is there an appetite for a register?

An overwhelming 85% of respondents thought that, if there was a register available, that people working in care should be encouraged to be on it.

Unsurprisingly, there was almost unanimous support from people who use care and the relatives and friends of those who use care. And findings suggest that care professionals themselves would be receptive to a voluntary care register - with over 80% showing support.

Care professionals were split almost 50/50 regarding whether being on the register should be a condition of employment. This was well supported by those who were using care directly.

#### Should there be a fee?

Understandable, most respondents were in favour of a small annual registration fee between £10 and £50, with some recommending a monthly charge of £5.

#### Does language matter?

Rightly so, it's clear that there is a desire to enhance the professional image of social care with Care Professional and Professional Care Worker being the most desired titles.

### What's being planned and what are the advantages?

The Voluntary Care Professional Register (VCPR), offers numerous benefits to both employers and care professionals, fostering a positive impact on the social care ecosystem. A key advantage is streamlining the recruitment process, freeing up time typically spent verifying references and conducting DBS checks. This would allow employers to focus on evaluating candidate suitability, ensuring the right fit for their care teams.

Much like the NMC register, it will serve as a powerful symbol of the dedication of a care professional to their field and commitment to maintaining high standards of care provision.

### Looking Ahead

The steering group has ambitious plans, with the desire to introduce a training passport system. Revolutionising continuous professional development. This would eliminate redundant mandatory training when changing role or employer, saving time, and reducing training costs.

We all know that the need for care will only continue to grow, and the sector must adapt and evolve to meet future demand. The care register could empower individuals seeking social care support to independently source care professionals, mitigating risks and providing reassurance. Access to the register will inform decisions, engage with quality care professionals, and foster trust in the sector.





### **In summary**

Evidently, there is a strong appetite for a voluntary social care register in England. The initial implementation, backed by investors and sponsors, will be free, ensuring the swift and seamless establishment of this transformative initiative.

The Voluntary Care Professional Register heralds a new era of accountability, professionalism, and recognition within the social care sector. With widespread support from stakeholders and an inclusive approach to address concerns, it will undoubtedly pave the way for a capable and motivated social care workforce, focused on delivering top-notch care to those in need.

*“The VCP Register offers numerous benefits to both employers and care professionals.”*

For more information on the register or to see the full survey report, please visit the Voluntary Care Professional Register website.  
<https://www.vcpr.co.uk>



**WAGS**

**WOMEN ACHIEVING GREATNESS  
IN SOCIAL CARE**

**2023**

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

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

Professor Vic Rayner, CEO, National Care Forum

**THE CATEGORIES**

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

**18**

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# A home away from home



**Commander  
Brian Boxall-Hunt**  
CEO  
The Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society

**Commander Brian Boxall-Hunt OBE, CEO at The Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society, discusses the importance of considered care home design and the positive impact this can have on residents' wellbeing.**

Care homes are an essential pillar of the care industry. But there's much more that goes into an effective and successful care home other than their four walls.

Ensuring that care facilities are modernised and appropriate requires careful and thoughtful design and consideration. An effective care home environment must strike the proper balance between providing comfortable living space whilst also being a practical area that can accommodate specific needs, such as wider corridors for wheelchair users.

At The Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society, we specialise in providing tailored care to retired seafarers and their dependents, including those living with dementia, at our care home Belvedere House. To provide the best possible care, it is important to always be forward thinking and innovative. We recently completed a programme of modernisation at the Society that includes an extension - allowing us to increase the size of 68 bedrooms to accommodate equipment that is needed day to day, such as hoists. Each renovated room will now be equipped with a wet room, air conditioning, USB ports, Smart TVs, and mood lighting.

Helping to ensure our facilities are up-to-date, suitable, and comfortable for our residents now and in the future.

## Physical care home design

The design of a care home is vital to ensuring the differing

needs of residents are met and

that they feel safe and secure. It is important that residents feel at ease and are comfortable enough that they recognise it as their home.

The decor and furnishings must be both inviting as well as practical. For instance, many of the carpets in Belvedere House are made of Flotex, a material that, while retaining a warm and cosy appearance, makes it much simpler to handle wheelchairs and other equipment.

At the Society, we care for many residents living with dementia, so this must be considered when choosing materials for soft furnishing, wallpaper, and flooring. Advice from the Alzheimer's Society states that flooring shouldn't be excessively reflective or slippery since these features can be confusing. Instead, plain, or mottled surfaces are preferable because patterns can impair perception and the floor, particularly on stairs, should contrast with the walls, to help with navigation.

As a specialised maritime care home, we have lots of maritime memorabilia and décor on site that resonates with our residents and can help trigger memories. Previous research has suggested that using familiar elements in the environment can improve the memory of older people and help them navigate around the care home.

*"The design of a care home is vital to ensuring the differing needs of residents are met."*

## Importance of community

It is not just the physical environment that can impact wellbeing, it is also important to consider the value of fostering community and building meaningful relationships with peers.

Care homes must have communal spaces where residents can engage in social activities and spend time with friends and family. At Belvedere House, our seafaring residents frequently enjoy reminiscing about tales of their time at sea, so making sure there are areas in the care facility for this is crucial for their wellbeing. Reminiscence can be even more beneficial for people with dementia, as it can give them a sense of independence and confidence through using a skill they still have.

As well as communal spaces it is crucial to have areas to facilitate activities and events. During our renovation we made the decision to create a new, larger activity room to allow for more space for hobbies and planned events. Any mind will function best when it is stimulated, engaged, and active, providing residents with a variety of beneficial activities and encouraging them to partake in many of them each day is vital. Offering a space where residents can partake in activities they enjoy and find meaningful can prompt positive emotions and supports, physical and mental health. Research suggests that participating in meaningful social activities, may help older people maintain their thinking skills better in later life and slow down cognitive decline.

Ultimately, it is our responsibility as care givers to support residents' independence and happiness whilst providing a comfortable and safe space. A key part of this is creating a familiar, welcoming environment that helps the residents feel at home, together these factors will enable happy, joyful lives in the retirement years.



# Bridging the gap:

## Building intergenerational relationships



**Shaleeza Hasham**

Founder and CEO  
Adopt a Grandparent

**Creating opportunities to build new relationships and make rewarding connections for residents in care homes has long been a challenging issue for care providers.**

The risk is that feelings of isolation or disconnection can negatively impact the mental and physical well-being of elderly individuals. Adopt a Grandparent's 'outside the box' approach to helping care home residents make new, meaningful connections was born of pandemic restrictions. It was also greatly influenced by the founder's own experience of growing up in the grounds of their family-run care home and the lasting impact of the intergenerational relationships they formed with the residents.

### The impact of loneliness

Some of the main causes of loneliness for those over 60 include the loss of friends and bereavement, meanwhile diminishing social and community networks are major causes for those over 80. While loneliness can touch us all, for our elderly population studies show it's associated with negative feelings, such as sadness, numbness, pain, hopelessness, and low self-worth. In more severe cases, research also shows that loneliness in the elderly can lead to increased risk of cognitive decline, dementia, reduced physical and mental health, high blood pressure and increased risk of mortality.

Adopt a Grandparent works to recruit and pair young volunteers with older adults based on common ground and shared interest or hobbies. The pair then has regular video calls from within its dedicated, custom-developed app which provides a safe and secure space for pairings to nurture their budding and rewarding friendship.

### The benefits of meaningful relationships

Intergenerational interactions can have profound psychological benefits, reducing feelings of loneliness and depression as well as helping older residents become more engaged, active, and enthusiastic about life.

*"Adopt a Grandparent works to recruit and pair young volunteers with older adults."*





*“Young volunteers take these newfound skills into the wider world.”*

One of Adopt a Grandparent's recent pairings is a great example of this. Robin Smith, 65, is a resident of Poplars Care Home, Ruislip. He was paired with Tiffany Lim as a reflection of a shared interest in chess as well as a way for Robin to explore his love of the Far East as Tiffany currently resides in Japan. On his calls with Tiffany, Robin said; *“I look forward to chatting with Tiffany enormously. She tells me all about her life, her job in advertising and the incredible technology in Japan – her television only has two buttons and is also a radio, and her computer is touchscreen, it's incredible.*

*“I talk about engineering which is the field I used to work in and am still very passionate about and she really listens to me. We've had some truly memorable moments on our calls too. I can't see too well so she often describes the view from her window to me but she has also taken the computer over to the window to show me the view of Tokyo from her 8th floor apartment. That was wonderful.*

*“Talking to Tiffany really makes me feel less lonely. It's a shame she's on the other side of the world but my chats with her are something to look forward to – she makes my day brighter.”*

### **Training and support**

To ensure the success of this intergenerational initiative, Adopt a Grandparent provides comprehensive training and support to both the young volunteers and care home staff through a partnership with Barclays Digital Eagles. A bespoke training platform equips 'grandchildren' with valuable communication skills, sensitivity training, and a better understanding of the challenges older adults may face. With specific modules covering communicating with those living with dementia, the training not only

helps to open up more care home residents to 'adoption' but also helps to build a more inclusive society as young volunteers take these newfound skills into the wider world. The charity also offers resources to care home staff to help them support residents taking part and ensure they get the most out of their pairing.

By adopting an innovative intergenerational approach, Adopt a Grandparent has helped care providers successfully tackle loneliness in its care home participants, enriching the lives of both elderly residents and young volunteers. As this heartwarming initiative continues to expand its reach, it serves as an inspiring reminder that a little creativity and compassion can go a long way in building a stronger and more connected community.

### **Getting involved**

Adopt a Grandparent's groundbreaking approach has touched the lives of older adults and young volunteers alike. With more than 90,000 young volunteers, the charity is calling for more care homes to sign-up and offer residents the chance to take part and benefit from the programme. To register your care home visit <https://www.adoptagrandparent.org.uk/register-your-care-home>

Fundraising is essential to helping Adopt a Grandparent continue to grow and develop the programme, to support the charity with a donation visit <https://gofund.me/82513238>

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

# The transformative power of relational care



**Jenny Kartupelis MBE**  
Relational Care Consultant  
and Visiting Fellow  
The Open University

**The current problems and future challenges facing the provision of adult social care in the UK remain high on the government and wider agendas: a soaring level of turnover – 25% - in the workforce with at least 160,000 vacancies, a dramatic 18% of care settings closing last year, and budgets eroded by inflation.**

The existence of these problems needs acknowledgement as well as an acceptance that there is no single 'magic bullet'. Nevertheless, changes to funding, attitudes and the nature of provision can all help. In relation to provision for older people, seminal research by the Open University (OU) - 'The Value and Practice of Relational Care' - shows that Relational Care has a definite role to play.

## What is Relational Care?

Mutuality in care, where everyone can be both 'givers' and 'receivers', valued and accepted for themselves is a natural way of living and has been for millennia. It happens already in the best care settings. However, recognising how it happens, its key components, and its importance enables the practice to be nurtured and replicated more formally. Recent research by the Open University, funded by the Hallmark Foundation, is helping to do just this and laying the foundations for future development.

The research team has explored different settings of good practice, analysing and defining what is happening in them day to day, how people feel about their lives, and the environments that makes this possible. They have produced not only a full report but also a lively and easy-to-use toolkit for providers and care staff, to guide them on implementation.

*“Mutuality in care, where everyone can be both ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’, is a natural way of living.”*

*“Research so far also strongly indicates much higher staff retention where Relational Care is practiced.”*

## Is it easy to implement?

A change of culture that purposefully enables two-way relationships and everyone to contribute to the community (whether this be day care or residential) is critical, giving a sense of belonging, acceptance and trust. This does not just happen by chance; the environment that favours it must be created, and this research describes in detail how to do this and what will be needed. Two examples are, how to make the decision-making process more inclusive and empowering, and how to use design, décor and material objects to help people form long-term relationships. Ease of implementation will depend on your starting point, and how much might have to change, but the costs are very unlikely to be prohibitive, and can be offset by savings from the benefits. In a new build, Relational Care can be 'designed in' using tested guidelines mixed with some innovation!

## Multiple benefits

Does any of this matter? Research shows that it clearly matters to the individuals concerned: Older people and staff feel a greater sense of belonging and being valued, find more purpose and meaning in life, and are quite simply happier. Their families are likely to reflect this in lower anxiety and greater engagement, and the local community is more likely to get involved, be supportive and become a source of staff.

This research so far also strongly indicates much higher staff retention where Relational Care is practiced, with savings on recruitment and induction becoming available for improved conditions of service. This work now needs to be taken further, to define other likely benefits such as lower client turnover, reduced medication and more overall stability for the enterprise.

## Find out more

The full report: 'The Value and Practice of Relational Care' [https://oro.open.ac.uk/88675/8/Relational%20care%20report\\_ORO%20VERSION%20EDIT.pdf](https://oro.open.ac.uk/88675/8/Relational%20care%20report_ORO%20VERSION%20EDIT.pdf)

The summary report: The Relational Care Report Summary [https://oro.open.ac.uk/88678/1/Relational%20care%20report%20summary\\_ORO.pdf](https://oro.open.ac.uk/88678/1/Relational%20care%20report%20summary_ORO.pdf)

The practitioners' toolkit: 'Making every relationship matter' <https://oro.open.ac.uk/88663/15/Relational%20care%20toolkit%20ORO%20VERSION%20EDIT.pdf>





*“Research shows that it clearly matters to the individuals concerned.”*



Original illustrations for the report and toolkit by Pen Mendonca

# The power of discussion to create cultural change



**Anisa Byne**  
Director of Marketing  
Access Health, Support and Care

**With the ageing population, workforce shortages and the lingering impacts of Covid-19, there has never been more urgency for fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. The care sector is facing multifaceted challenges, ranging from ensuring high-quality care and developing sustainable funding models to embracing technology.**

*“The care sector is facing multifaceted challenges.”*

At The Access Group, we believe that a culture of change can be facilitated by providing platforms for open dialogue and discourse. To this end, we have created an environment where thought leaders can come together to dissect and discuss the intricacies of care provision. Our new podcast series, ‘Redefining Care,’ offers listeners a chance to delve into candid conversations that challenge the status quo and surface possible solutions.

As the podcast host, I feel privileged to present a platform where thought leaders in the field come together to discuss and design a future for social care in the UK, but also learn from international best practice and examples.

Our series launched in August with an incredibly insightful interview with Professor Vic Rayner OBE, CEO of the National Care Forum. Vic articulated the priority of ensuring that social care providers are integral to decision-making processes, with a clear focus on placing the people who use care at the core of our strategies. With her extensive experience and knowledge, as chair of the government’s Strategic Advisory Forum on the social care workforce and co-chair of the National Social Care Advisory Group on social care and technology, she discusses the necessity of supporting our social care workforce and highlights insights from global care sector developments.

## **Elevating the role of care workers**

One of our most heartfelt discussions was with Karolina Gerlich, CEO of the Care Workers Charity. Reflecting on the charity’s provision of more than £4.5 million in grants

to nearly 7,000 care workers since 2020, she shed light on the harsh realities many workers face. She passionately spoke about care workers’ immense sacrifices – from living away from their families to navigating challenging working conditions and enduring extended hours. This dedication underscores the need to acknowledge the value of care work and the essential role care workers play in our society.

Adding to the narrative, Martin Green, CEO of Care England, emphasised the need for more robust integration between health and social care. With nearly 30 years in the UK care sector, Martin accentuated the importance of long-term funding, sustainability, and increasing the appeal of careers in care to attract a motivated and skilled workforce. In our discussion we unravelled the complexities of raising the status of the care workforce and overcoming deep-rooted barriers to integration between health and care.

## **Embracing personalised care**

Amrit Dhaliwal, CEO of Walfinch, further expanded the discourse by focusing on the future of home-based care. Drawing on his journey to becoming the leader of a successful care business, Amrit discussed the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services’ report, which highlighted a sharp increase in adults waiting for social care - from 294,000 to over 500,000 in just a year. This alarming trend necessitates a renewed focus on how we perceive and deliver home-based care, which utilises technology’s potential to drive personalised care solutions.

The ‘Redefining Care’ podcast’s expert perspectives, reinforce our commitment to facilitating holistic discussions about social care. By bridging gaps, acknowledging challenges, and highlighting potential solutions, we aim to equip those involved in care provision with insights to help propel the sector forward.

At a time where a culture of innovation is imperative, we invite you to tune in and be part of these transformative conversations that explore how we think and what we do about social care.

**#RedefiningCare**

*“There has never been more need for fresh perspectives and innovative ideas.”*





*“Martin Green, CEO of Care England, emphasised the need for more robust integration between health and social care.”*

Find out more about the Access Group 'Redefining Care' podcast here:

Apple Podcasts - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/redefining-care/id1701117409>

Spotify - <https://open.spotify.com/show/7DHOJcASo3HkNf3Jp3Slgm>

Google Podcasts - <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkcyc5idXp6c3Byb3V0LmNvbS8yMjE4NjE3LnJzcw>

Here is a linktree type link from Buzzsprout which allows you to stream from where you prefer to listen: <https://redefiningcare.buzzsprout.com/share>

# Terminology talks

## Why using the right terminology can help attract a broader range of people



**swiis**  
foster care

**Vicci Jones**  
Director of Social Work  
Swiis Foster Care

**Whilst some carers prefer to be known as 'foster carers' and others prefer 'foster parents', in practical terms it is essentially the same role. In some contexts, the difference between 'carer' and 'parent' is subtle, but for many families and the wider foster care sector, the use of terminology can make a huge difference.**

When the Children's Act legislation was established in 1989, the term 'foster parent' was more commonly used, but with the introduction of subsequent legislation since then, that term became largely outdated. Yet, at Swiis, we've noticed that despite no official change in policy, the term 'foster parent' is becoming more widely used in the industry and by government departments. So, what term is correct and what impact does the terminology have on the industry?

### **The need to highlight the professionalism of foster carers**

There is a strong view to say that amid a shift towards the term 'foster parent', the risk is that it doesn't capture the breadth of tasks that a professional foster carer undertakes, nor does it do justice to a crucial role.

The move to the term 'foster carer' was originally a drive to raise the professional status of foster carers, to enable them to have professional status in the team around the child. Foster carers are highly trained professionals.

For example, foster carers at Swiis go through a comprehensive training programme and receive ongoing specialist support to ensure they always have access to the latest information they need to fulfil their potential and change the lives of the children in their care.

Caring for other people's children is complex. A professional approach is needed to manage the intricacies of emotions in, and out of the home from dealing with education providers, the NHS, as well as ongoing 'family time' with the birth parent(s).

*"Some carers prefer to be known as 'foster carers' and others prefer 'foster parents'."*

### **Encouraging inclusivity in foster care careers**

The challenge in using the term 'foster parent' is that it may lead to the misconception that you must already be a parent to become a foster parent. At a time when the demand for foster carers is on the rise, the danger is that people will rule themselves out of a career in foster care.

While being a foster carer does assume an element of parenting, it's much more than that – and is open to people of all backgrounds and situational differences.

In comparison, the foster carer title can help attract, and support applications from a broader range of people.

### **Use a child-first approach**

Ultimately, the most important consideration is what works best for the individual child.

A child may wish to refer to their carer as a 'foster parent'; the person, couple or family that has room in their hearts to care for, love and support a child and treat them as one of their own.

We also know that children in foster care do not wish to be identified as being in care. They simply wish to be allowed to get on with their life, with the support to do this.

Most children and young people have continued significant links to birth families and we know this is an elemental part of their identity. For them, referring to their foster carers as parents may create confusion when they already have a relationship with their own parents.

I believe there is value in both terms, with 'foster carer' remaining the prominent term, and with sensitive use, the term 'foster parent' has a place to acknowledge the emotional element of the role.

*"The most important consideration is what works best for the individual child."*



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# A carer's call to arms



**Diane Maynell**  
Care Worker,  
Blossom Home

**It's funny isn't it how good can come from bad? Of course, it doesn't always happen and we have daily proof of that, but when it does we love to hear about it because it's a corrective - a small triumph...a hopeful path.**

There have been many such stories from the darkness of Covid-19 and we've clung to them, quite rightly. And because we love them, here's another:

*“With the zeal of a convert, Diane took to Facebook to broadcast a rallying cry.”*

Diane Meynell had been working in sales for the Scottish food and drinks industry for 25 years and fully expected to remain there until retirement. It was what she knew and what she excelled at. And then the pandemic arrived and she was made redundant - just like that.

And like so many people, she always thought care work was a role requiring no skills or experience and was mostly wiping bottoms. She also couldn't understand who would choose to do it when they could earn similar money working in a nice shop.

Sprint forward and I'm chatting with Diane who has now been working over two years as a carer for Blossom Home Care, a multi award-winning domiciliary care provider up in Northallerton.

Big question - why?!

*“Well, I was in my mid forties and it felt like the right time to try something different. I kept seeing the Blossom advert and then a friend who worked for them suggested it. My dad died of MND four years ago and he had excellent care so it's something I actually witnessed. I guess a seed was sown back then.”*

Blossom offered Diane a job by the end of the week and she has never looked back.

And, of course, it was not at all the image she'd had of care workers: there are full-time and part-time mums, dads, grannies, students taking degrees in psychology and criminology, plus very 'normal folk' like Diane with loads of life experience but no background in the care sector. The team is as diverse as can be, but the one thing they have in common is a strong work ethic and a determination to improve the lives of other people.

*“Yes, it was the best decision I've ever made. Truthfully. You make a difference to lives every day. I liked Sales but you never thought you were doing something worthwhile. You were held up as the best of the best as long as you sold more next time. Care is totally different - the more you genuinely look after your clients, the more they feel loved and get what they need. It's 100 per cent more fulfilling than Sales!”*

And so, with the zeal of a convert, Diane took to Facebook to broadcast a rallying cry. She wrote a long, no holds barred personal piece, telling her story and exhorting people to consider a career in care especially if they're sitting in an office not enjoying it.

It's certainly not every day on Facebook you get the chance to read about and learn from one person's conversion to care, but Diane's story is classic inspiration, and as she writes at the end:

*“If you're stuck in a rut, feeling underwhelmed by your career or don't feel valued or appreciated, you really can do something about it. Don't be scared to be nice, kind and helpful for a living. Become a carer. You won't have any trouble finding a job, and you won't just be changing the lives of the people you care for. You'll be changing your own life, too.”*



*“Don't be scared to be nice, kind and helpful for a living.”*



**Debra Mehta**



# From Kuwait to CCL for a career in social care



**Joel and his family travelled to the UK from Kuwait so that he could follow his passion to take up a career in social care. With no experience in care apart from having lived with a family of carers, he bravely decided to travel across the world to begin his journey in social care with us at Condover Care and Learning (CCL).**



Joel was perfect for the role with his caring, kind, positive outlook on life and ambition to learn. Since being with CCL Joel has completed his Care Certificate and is keen to move forward with his personal development and training.

Joel supports residents with profound learning difficulties and disabilities, he has learnt how to communicate with those he supports, most of which are non-verbal. He can communicate with them to make choices and shows empathy and is responsive to each individual's needs. He ensures that all needs are met in a person-centred way. Joel understands what care means, treating everyone individually like he would want to be treated himself and understands everyone is different. He promotes resident's choices daily by helping them choose what they want to drink or eat and helping them pick out clothes they like to wear each day, whilst withholding dignity and respect of the residents at all times.



**Joel Joji**  
Support Worker, Condover College

*“Well done Joel on making a great leap into the work of social care in a new country!”*

Joel had his first appraisal earlier this year. Joel said *“I did not think I would last long working in social care, but with the support from the CCL team, I have been able to learn. The learners are amazing and I enjoy working with them”*. Joel's long term ambition is to be a Social Worker. He has worked extremely hard supporting the residents, doing extra hours to save money so that he could fund his dream and gain a degree at University to achieve his ambition. We are delighted that Joel now has his place secured at University and will step down from his full time support worker role

and remain with CCL as a bank

member of staff, so at weekends and over the holiday periods he can continue to work and have contact with the residents that he has built up relationships with and cared for.

Hazel his Manager at CCL speaks highly of Joel *“This young man will achieve so much in life, he already has and deserves to do so well by the sheer determination, focus and hard work ethic within him. Well done Joel on making a great leap into the work of social care in a new country.*

*We all at CCL wish you the very best and will miss you as a full time support worker, we are so honoured you started your journey with us and can't wait to celebrate your degree with you when you qualify to be a Social Worker, you will smash it!”*

[www.condovercollege.co.uk](http://www.condovercollege.co.uk)

*“Joel and his family travelled from Kuwait to take up a career in social care.”*



# A beacon of change in Bedfordshire inspires leadership



## Chelsea Laing's unparalleled

**dedication and impactful interventions in the East London Foundation Trust CAMHS Intensive Support Team (IST), reaffirm the notion that individuals can bring about monumental change.**

With one prime objective, preventing Tier 4 admissions, which cover facilities for children and young people with mental health problems who require hospital admission, Chelsea has gone from managing the IST Pilot scheme to establish the programme as a local service and becoming its Operational Lead.

Chelsea has shown an exemplary trajectory of leadership. Her role in assembling a specialised team focused on supporting young people diagnosed with autism and/or a learning disability, is noteworthy. Her commendable efforts have transformed mental health care for young people across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes by providing support at home.

Early intervention is pivotal in mental health and Chelsea's pioneering efforts stand as a testament to this principle. The Intensive Support Team has touched the lives of 70 young people, with a remarkable reduction in hospital admissions. By ensuring short stays for the mere 10 admitted to the hospital, Chelsea's initiative has achieved a significant reduction in the stress and disruption typically associated with lengthy hospitalisations. The consistent appreciation from external agencies, especially social workers and the local general hospitals, attests to the indelible mark she's leaving in the broader medical community. The decline in inappropriate mental health admissions under her watch speaks volumes.

Beyond the numbers, however, lies the true impact - the lives she's transformed. Both her team and the young people under their care stand to vouch for the unwavering support and dedication she offers.

Chelsea's foundation as a qualified learning disability nurse gave her the unique blend of expertise and empathy. Her profound knowledge undoubtedly played a pivotal role in shaping this service precisely to cater to its beneficiaries. Working across Bedfordshire, including Luton and Milton Keynes, Chelsea has zeroed in on those at the highest risk of admission.

Her approach to keep individuals closer to their homes and support networks, demonstrates a profound understanding of mental wellbeing. This philosophy resonates with the sentiments of staying rooted and finding solace in familiarity.



Chelsea Laing



Chelsea (right) supporting Ruby (left): A testament to the transformative power of personalised care and collaboration.

Her approach to keep individuals closer to their homes and support networks, demonstrates a profound understanding of mental wellbeing. This philosophy resonates with the sentiments of staying rooted and finding solace in familiarity.

The IST Team interventions aim for a multi-pronged approach. By collaborating with social workers and families, each individual supported benefits from a personalised care plan. Whether it's creative therapies, participation in sports, or engaging in visits to local attractions, Chelsea's, and her teams, holistic approach encompasses both mental and physical wellbeing.

Deborah Duval, Senior Support Worker at The East London Foundation Trust CAMHS had this to say about Chelsea's success: "Chelsea has been an amazing manager to the team.

External agencies, including local general hospitals, have commented and complemented the team on the reduction of inappropriate admissions due to Mental Health. The positive impact that Chelsea has made, not only to the young people we support, but to her team has been truly admirable."

The East London Foundation Trust CAMHS, which serves diverse areas, including Bedfordshire and Luton, champions the cause of mental and community health care. Their vision aligns seamlessly with Chelsea's ethos: making a positive difference in people's lives. The East London Foundation Trust's commitment to care, respect, and inclusivity shines brightly through the endeavours of individuals like Chelsea.

Chelsea Laing stands as an embodiment of dedication and transformative change emphasising the importance of creating networks and interlinking services for holistic patient care. Her relentless efforts, innovative interventions, and empathetic approach have not only set benchmarks in mental health care but have genuinely made a difference in countless lives.

Chelsea's journey and achievements undoubtedly deserve the limelight, appreciation, and recognition.





# Come dine with Roseway House



**Dawn Lyon**  
Lifestyle Support Lead  
Roseway House, Amicura

**We've been watching it for nearly 20 years, haven't we! Like all shows that stand the test of time and enter the national psyche, Come Dine with Me has that 'thing': a winning formula that proves to be enduring TV gold. On an**

**obvious level, it works so well because we all like to eat and to win and enjoy ourselves!**

Dawn Lyon, Lifestyle Support Lead for Roseway House Care Home, (part of Amicura), certainly thinks so because she has decided to utilise the format not just for fun within the home, but to bring together other local care homes.

So, how did it all come about?



*Well, we were chatting about the series and I thought it would be really good to do! At first I was just thinking that a few residents could design a menu each but then I wondered how we could extend it because obviously the residents all know one another here. Roseway is very much part of the community but a lot of care homes seem very closed doors and I liked the idea of perhaps changing that."*

Dawn has been at Roseway House for seven years having previously worked abroad for travel companies for many years. Like so many people I speak with, life turned in a different direction and she fell into the care sector where her skills, talents and personality are nurtured and appreciated. Dawn cares a great deal but there's also an expansiveness to her view of her role and as exemplified in her Come Dine with Me plan:

*"Yes, I want it to be impactful...to use it as an opportunity not just for fun but to interact with other care homes - break down barriers - because there are so many things we could be sharing and learning from, and ultimately people within the community are going to benefit. Plus creating links professionally which I think is really important. It would be great to inspire each others' menus so chefs get to know what other people are cooking and how other people run their service, entertainment, attitudes etc. I'm an eternal optimist!"*

***"Dawn decided to utilise the format not just for fun within the home, but to bring together other local care homes."***

So, with a prize pot of £300 from a local grant, there are now four homes taking part and it's due to start on the 4th of September over the course of four weeks. Each home will visit each other with a nominated resident and carer, and the chefs at each will cook the menu which has been selected by the residents as the best to put forward for the competition.

When I suggest it sounds like an organisational nightmare, Dawn laughs and sets me straight:

*"I'm quite bullish, so when I get an idea I think there HAS to be a way round it! I've always liked to think outside the box with problems, and faced with them here because no two days are ever the same, I always think there's a way around everything, regardless!"*

Dawn exudes warmth and fun but she's also driven to learn and expand, keeping herself up-to-date with fresh ideas in order to evolve her role. Last year she completed the Dementia Care Mapper course at Bradford University, and she also does med rounds having taken her Level One in Medication because she knows it has a direct impact on how residents are day-to-day and how they perceive doing things in terms of activities.

Dawn clearly thrives on making meaningful connections of one sort or another and what better way than literally 'breaking bread' with other care homes in the community. And I couldn't say goodbye without asking Dawn for her ideal menu. Not surprisingly, given she lived and worked there for many years, it's Spanish:

- Tomato Bread with Serrano Ham
- Paella
- Crema Catalana

It's a win all round from me, Dawn!



**Debra Mehta**



**Peter Kinsey**  
Chief Executive and Chair  
Iris Care Group





WHAT KEEPS ME



AWAKE AT NIGHT

# Peter Kinsey

## Chief Executive and Chair, Iris Care Group

**After working in health and social care for 37 years and retiring twice, I am delighted to once again be leading an organisation that is working hard to improve the lives of the people we support. It's great to be involved at the launch of Iris Care Group which I think has huge potential to be a leading champion of best practice, particularly in supporting people with the most complex and challenging needs.**

Ever since I was a Home Manager in the 1980s helping a group of young men who were labelled as having "challenging behaviour" move from long-stay hospital to a new life in the community, I have always been drawn to working with this group of people. I have been actively involved for a number of years at a national level promoting positive behaviour support as an effective way of helping people who challenge to communicate and get their needs met.

*"The one thing you can predict in care is that things will go wrong from time to time."*

I am really pleased to be leading Iris Care Group which has some absolutely fantastic staff with enormous expertise in supporting some of the most complex and challenging people in the country. I am excited about the possibility of developing some really high quality leading-edge services that will offer a community-based alternative to hospital care.

When it comes to what keeps me up a night, I think I have become quite sanguine as I've lived with risk for many years. The one thing you can predict in care is that things will go wrong from time to time, despite your best efforts. I think the most important thing for leaders to pay attention to are:

*"I have been actively involved for a number of years at a national level promoting positive behaviour support."*

- **Getting the right people in key leadership roles.** Anyone who has read the excellent *"From Good to Great"* by Jim Collins will know the importance of *"getting the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus."*
- **Promoting a strong open culture in which staff feel appreciated and in which the reporting of concerns is actively encouraged. Visible leadership is absolutely essential. I am out in services every week speaking to people we support and staff. It really is the only way to know what's going on.**
- **Having effective governance processes so that you are getting the right information to monitor and manage the most significant risks.**
- **Making sure you respond really quickly to serious incidents, including learning lessons and having very well thought through communication with next of kin, commissioners, regulators, and Safeguarding. Openness and honesty rather defensiveness is crucial.**

This is a tough sector and it's got tougher in recent years.

Recruitment in particular is hugely challenging and I'm not sure that the regulatory and commissioning structures in this country do enough to promote and encourage outstanding practice which is focused on the quality of life that the people we support live.

Despite that, it continues to be hugely rewarding making a real difference to some of the most marginalised people in our society.

*"Visible leadership is absolutely essential – it is the only way to know what's going on."*



## CO-PRODUCTION COUNTS!

# Our names are on the door, next to the professor's!



**Richard Keagan-Bull,  
Amanda Cresswell,  
Leon Jordan and  
David Jeffrey**  
Research Assistants  
Kingston University

**We are 4 researchers with a learning disability. Kingston University has employed us as proper members of the learning disability research team. They made it possible for us.**

They ran a research course. The application process was accessible. The application form was in Easy Read, and the interview panel put us at ease. They employ support researchers to help us.

The latest person to be employed was David. He had help from Jo, the support researcher. This is because it is quite hard for people with learning disabilities to understand the process of applying for the job, and to cope with it. We found that giving information in Easy Read is not really enough.

We all get a lot of help from Jo and Tasha (another support researcher). They make sure we are doing ok. They talk with us about the job. They help us book taxis to get to work, and they help us with our emails.

We also get help from all our other colleagues: Irene, Becky, Andrea, Sarah and Jonny. Irene is the professor. She does our appraisals. Even our appraisals are in Easy Read. We are a great team. We call ourselves "The A-Team"!

This is what each of us want to say about working at Kingston University:

**RICHARD:** "It feels great making a positive difference to other people with a learning disability. We have the learning disability, we live it, we're the experts, so that's why we're employed. We're more than just a pat on the back and we bring so much to this job. Working here makes me feel good about myself wearing smart clothes, going off to do a day's work, getting paid for it. I feel valued. I can now shop in places I never used to be able to. This job has opened doors for me. I get to meet different people like professors and training the nurses of the future. I feel part of society."

**LEON:** "I didn't know you could be a university researcher, so I'm really surprised and pleased. It's a warm, relaxed, friendly atmosphere. At lunchtime we all sit together, as equals, sharing our news."

**"We're more than just a pat on the back and we bring so much to this job."**

**AMANDA:** "We can do anything we want to do in our lives if we have the right support. But not everybody will think of employing someone with a learning disability. Now other universities can see, LOOK! These people can work together as a team. Why can't WE employ someone with a learning disability?"

**DAVID:** "I think it's most important to have someone with a learning disability on a research team for their points of view and their experience of a having a learning disability. It would be more difficult to make discoveries about other people's (with learning disabilities) thoughts and ideas, if we weren't on the team. Only 5% of people with a learning disability have paid work. Kingston University is a trail blazer by employing us. What we really like here is that people look up to us, not down at us. They treat us with respect. We feel proud working here."







# Care Consultancy Ltd

## Our Services

### **Crisis Management**

Working with providers in maintaining compliance. Working with administrators and insolvency teams to help manage and guide you through a difficult time.

### **Quality Assurance**

Working with services to ensure they provide high quality care. Supporting providers to maintain Good standards of care and work toward Outstanding.

### **Mock Inspections**

To assist services in preparing for regulatory inspection and ensure standards are maintained to a high standard.

### **Training & Development**

Supporting both providers and staff in working to the highest standard whilst keeping up with regulatory changes.

### **Due Diligence**

Working with various stakeholders, including banks, receivers and investors, in establishing the current operational status of care services.

### **Expert Witness/Investigations**

Supporting services, and staff, in preparing for court and tribunal proceedings.

## 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.

**For Further Information**

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[info@bkrcc.co.uk](mailto:info@bkrcc.co.uk)

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**The Care Industry Experts.**



## ASK THE EXPERTS

# Fostering innovation in social care



**Innovation possesses the capacity to revolutionise social care, enhancing results and establishing a more stable foundation for the sector. With this in mind, we asked a group of award winning stakeholders, “What new strategies or approaches have you implemented to foster innovation within your social care practice?”**

*“Our new intranet app that presents us with the opportunity to create one digital world for the organisation.”*



**James Allen**  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Care Group

*“National Care Group is a heavily distributed and non-desked organisation, typical of many of the large providers in our sector. To remove the communication barriers that come with distance and the absence of corporate email for our frontline workers, we have recently launched a new intranet app that presents us with the opportunity to create one digital world for the organisation. The app launched in February this year and for the first time, we can connect every single colleague not just to the National Care Group brand and to central support, but to each other too, regardless of location. It’s been great to be able to provide colleagues with an innovative mobile intranet: a ‘go to’ workplace assistant on their smartphone, available whenever needed. They can now check the latest updates, book holidays, check their payslip, read and acknowledge new policies, tap into wellness resources, and even ‘pre-board’ as a new starter”.*



**Sharon Ely**  
Operations Director  
Next Steps



*“We source properties by working with local housing agencies, involving the client and their circle of support.”*

*“Our focus is to find innovative ways to support well-being, whilst ensuring a person-centred approach. We have developed our own internal system to allow us to access and monitor real-time information for the people we support and our teams. Our internal tools and systems measure performance and outcomes, which facilitates decision-making and improvements, allowing us to deploy our financial resources into delivering our bespoke services. One way we do this is to support our clients, who have limited housing options available to them, to access the private housing market. We source properties by working with local housing agencies, involving the client and their circle of support. We make any necessary adjustments to these properties based on the client’s requirements, ensuring their safety and well-being. We have a shared vision of improving the lives and well-being of the people we support, and we work in partnership with external professionals, including positive partnership teams and behaviour specialists, to achieve this.”*





**Paul de Savary**  
Managing Director  
Home for Home Care



*“Seeing the extraordinary benefits of changing an individual’s complex life into an ordinary life, gives everyone a sense of purpose and belonging.”*

*“80 million pieces of data annually have fundamentally changed the lives of the 91 individuals we support, and our 500 colleagues who support them. Real time data is allowing us to see an individual’s life in slow motion and to deal with issues that predate the recognisable “problem”. The transparency that data creates has changed our relationship with colleagues, drawing everyone into a process of collaborative working. The creative solutions scaling from this are underpinned by a “Just Culture” with its assurance of fairness and positive risk taking. Seeing the extraordinary benefits of changing an individual’s complex life into an ordinary life, gives everyone a sense of purpose and belonging. Now the boring bit – unless you’re a geek! Over 12 years, we’ve created a unique single entry interoperable digital platform with end to end software covering every silo function/product corresponding to all aspects of our operations. And then there’s the Ecosystem!”*

*“Staff have access to ‘try it days’ which enables those who wish to progress into a management role to learn more about the role.”*



**James Wilson**  
Managing Director  
Aspire Day Services

*“Aspire Day Service Ltd has implemented several strategies to foster innovation within their social care practice. We’ve established Quality Meetings where staff, service users, and their families come together to promote an open and innovative culture, shaping the services we provide. These meetings provide a platform for everyone to share their ideas and suggestions, encouraging a collaborative approach to problem-solving and continuous improvement. Aspire emphasises continuous professional development for all staff, focusing on both social care knowledge and individual career progression. This ensures that employees are equipped with the latest skills and expertise, enabling them to think creatively and innovate in their roles. Staff have access to ‘try it days’ which enables those who wish to progress into a management role to learn more about the role, this has kept staff engaged within the service. Suggestion and feedback boxes, allowing staff members to submit their ideas, staff are rewarded for coming up with innovative activities or new products, creating an incentive for further creativity. Furthermore, the company has formed partnerships with local schools, enabling us to access additional knowledge, meet growing social care demand, and to create a roadmap for those moving up to adult social care.”*



**Joanna Scammell**  
Managing Director for  
Technology Enabled Care  
Community Integrated Care



*“Some of the best and most effective ideas come from our colleagues on the frontline.”*

*“We know that innovation is crucial to driving positive change and ensuring the delivery of sector-leading care and support. Whilst strategically, we have focused business objectives around exploring new innovative technologies and care practices, some of the best and most effective ideas come from our colleagues on the frontline. They are, after all, working directly with the people we support every day. They know each person inside out, including the challenges they face and where we can make impactful differences. When looking at how to foster innovation in our practice, we work hard to create an open and inclusive culture – from hosting roadshows with our frontline leaders to creating safe spaces and forums or visiting individual services to gather feedback directly. This has enabled us to provide innovations that support the outcomes of our people, as opposed to “finding” people to fit innovations. There’s so much power in listening to our workforce and for us, it’s the key to driving meaningful, person-centered innovation that can change lives”.*

# THE DEMENTIA CARE AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence in  
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- ★ THE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PROJECT AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA CARE HOME WORKER AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA REGISTERED MANAGER AWARD ★
- ★ THE INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITY AWARD ★
- ★ THE ACTIVITY COORDINATOR AWARD ★
- ★ THE OUTREACH AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA TRAINER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AWARD ★
- ★ THE INNOVATIVE SPACES WITHIN RESIDENTIAL CARE: DESIGN AWARD ★
- ★ THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA'S UNSUNG HERO AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY BUSINESS AWARD ★
- ★ THE RESPITE HOLIDAY PROVIDER AWARD ★
- ★ THE DEMENTIA COMMUNITY CARE WORKER AWARD ★
- ★ THE INSPIRING VOLUNTEER AWARD ★
- ★ THE ADMIRAL NURSE AWARD ★
- ★ THE CREATIVE NUTRITION AWARD ★
- ★ THE DIVERSITY AND DEMENTIA AWARD ★
- ★ THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY AND DEMENTIA AWARD ★
- ★ THE LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA: CO-PRODUCTION AND PARTNERSHIP AWARD ★
- ★ THE CREATING SPACES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: DEVELOPER AWARD ★
- ★ THE INSPIRATIONAL PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AWARD ★
- ★ THE UNPAID CARER AWARD ★
- ★ THE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO DEMENTIA AWARD ★

N o m i n a t e N O W a t :

[www.dementiacareawards.co.uk](http://www.dementiacareawards.co.uk)



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**

**12th October 2023**  
Hilton Bankside, London

### **The National Children & Young People Awards**

**21st October 2023** The ICC, Birmingham

### **Great British Care Awards Regionals**

#### **Yorkshire & Humberside - 2nd November 2023**

The Royal Armouries, Leeds

#### **East of England - 3rd November 2023**

Milton Keynes Dons

#### **West Midlands - 4th November 2023**

The ICC, Birmingham

#### **Scotland - 8th November 2023**

Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow

#### **North East - 9th November 2023**

The Grand Gosforth Hotel, Newcastle

#### **North West - 11th November 2023**

Kimpton Clocktower Hotel, Manchester

#### **Wales - 16th November 2023**

The Marriott Hotel, Cardiff

#### **South East - 17th November 2023**

Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton

#### **London - 18th November 2023**

Hilton Bankside, London

#### **South West - 23rd November 2023**

Aston Gate, Bristol

#### **East Midlands - 24th November 2023**

East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham

### **Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards**

**21st November 2023**  
The Marriott Grosvenor Square Hotel, London

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



## LEADING THE WAY IN SOCIAL CARE

# Katie Doyle

## Managing Director, Cross Care Ltd



**My journey into care happened purely by chance. Formerly a teaching assistant, I struggled to secure work after relocating to Shropshire and as such decided to give a career in social care a chance. I applied for a role as a carer in the community and initially felt totally overwhelmed. However, I knew I had to give it a chance and so I continued to show up and have never looked back!**

For five years, I worked for different service providers, but none of them gave me the chance to grow and I soon felt very undervalued and overworked. Despite my dream of owning a domiciliary care company, I lacked self-esteem and didn't believe I could ever do it.

Things changed though in 2018. While working for a local care provider, I met Ruth, who was my manager at the time. We both felt undervalued, saw poor care, and we're treated badly, so we joined forces and decided to create our own care company.

Cross Care was born in June 2019, whilst brainstorming over a coffee in Costa. Ruth's late father John, was a vicar and had unfortunately received poor care. He was the inspiration behind "Cross, in" Cross Care". We knew we wanted to make him proud!

I quickly registered the business with Companies House and got to work on registering Cross Care with the Care Quality Commission, (CQC). I wanted to deliver care "the right way" and create a workforce that felt valued and had the opportunity to grow in the world of social care.

*"I wanted to lead by example and prove that if I could do it, anyone could."*

*"I wanted to deliver care 'the right way' and create a workforce that felt valued."*

In November 2019, having flown through our CQC interview, Cross Care became a registered care provider and we began operating. Despite the pandemic hitting and lockdown occurring after signing for our first office in March 2020, I didn't let this defeat me and continued to grow Cross Care while delivering care myself alongside my staff. In September 2020, Cross Care registered with CIW, (Care Inspectorate Wales). I wanted to lead by example and prove that if I could do it, anyone could.

Fast forward to 2023 and Cross Care has continued to go from strength to strength, retaining staff who have been with the company from the beginning.

I ensure that my staff are recognised for their hard work through "Employee of the Month," drop-ins, supervisions, and appraisals and many of my staff have been promoted. I am also passionate about raising awareness around mental health having faced difficulties myself during my late teens and so I recently held an open day at the office to promote the importance of talking about mental health.

Cross Care aims to maintain a small, person centered service that prides itself on continuity and good quality care. With support and recognition, I have been able to retain staff and create a company that values its employees and the people we care for.

My journey in the world of care began with uncertainty and doubt, but my determination and passion led me to create Cross Care, a company that provides quality care while valuing its workforce.



# Paying tribute to women leaders of social care

**On 15th June, Care Talk were proud to pay tribute to some of The Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards finalists.**

Representing all areas of the sector, these inspirational women were invited to attend an afternoon tea at The House of Lords, kindly hosted Lord Palmer of Childs Hill OBE.

Guest speakers was Nadra Ahmed CBE, Chair of the National Care Association.

The reception provided an exceptional platform to acknowledge and connect with remarkable women leaders and emerging talents who have displayed a remarkable commitment to caring, assisting their peers, and embracing inventive approaches to delivering exemplary care and support.

These extraordinary women not only exceed expectations but have surpassed them by a significant margin. Their passion for caring and supporting others, coupled with their innovative thinking, has made a profound impact on the lives of those they serve.

These women leaders and rising stars demonstrate that passion, creativity, and innovation can transform the ordinary into something extraordinary. Their contributions have not only improved the lives of individuals who draw on care and support but have also set a standard of excellence for others to follow.



**WAGS**  
WOMEN ACHIEVING GREATNESS  
IN SOCIAL CARE



To nominate for this year's Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care go to

**[www.thewags.co.uk/nominate](http://www.thewags.co.uk/nominate)**

[www.thewags.co.uk](http://www.thewags.co.uk) #ThankYouSocialCare #SocialCareWomen



# Winners of the National Learning Disability & Autism Awards 2023



30th June saw over 700 people come together for the National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards, at Birmingham's International Convention Centre. After impressing our short listing panel with their nominations, wowing our judges at the interviews, the evening was a great platform to celebrate and pay tribute to the best of the best in social care and support for people with learning disabilities and/or autism, as well as inspirational experts through lived experience.



Through Care Talk magazine and events like this we aim to inject the good news into social care. We meet so many amazing people who genuinely care and make a real difference to peoples' lives. These awards demonstrate excellence in the sector thanks to hard working, dedicated people who deliver quality care and support in our communities and inspirational people who draw on services.



## The Winners!

The Employer Award (Independent)  
**Resolve Care Northern Ltd**



The Employer Award (Not For Profit)  
**Autism Matters**



The Employer of People With a Disability Award  
**Kingston University**



The Newcomer Award  
**Matt Price**  
Community Integrated Care



The Support Worker Award (Independent)  
**Abbie Smith**  
Hollywood House



The Support Worker Award (Not For Profit)  
**Cheryl Hobbs**  
Camphill MK Communities



The Registered Manager Award (Independent)  
**Susan Ball**  
Grays Healthcare



The Registered Manager Award (Not For Profit)  
**Tom Bridle**  
Camphill Communities







The Senior Manager Award  
**Jake Thompson**  
Bondcare




The Learning Disability Nurse Award  
**Lyndsey Clare**  
HMP Ranby



The Making a Difference Award (Individual)  
**Dan Harris**  
Neurodiversity in Business



The Making a Difference Award (Team)  
**Donna & Christie**  
Calmer Therapy



The Oliver McGowan Mandaotory Training Award  
**Ginette Clarke**  
SENAD




The Frontline Leader Award (Independent)  
**Lisa Stephenson**  
Kingsway



The Frontline Leader Award (Not For Profit)  
**Sasha Gilbert**  
Norfolk County Council



The Positive Risk Taking Award  
**Consensus**



The Supported Housing Award  
**Sally Jobling and the Team**  
Salutem Care & Education



The Breaking Down Barriers Award (Individual)  
**Niall Guite**  
Art With a Special Goal



The Breaking Down Barriers Award (Team)  
**Moorview Matters**  
Moorview Care



The Sporting Chance Award  
**Community Integrated Care Inclusive Volunteering Programme**



The Lord Rix Supporting Older People With a Learning Disability Award  
**The Minims Team**  
SJOG



The Great Autism Practice Award  
**Lorna Durrant & The Specialist Service Team**  
Eden Futures



The People's Award  
**Woodhall Community Centre**  
SJOG



The Jim Mansell Outstanding Contribution Award  
**Lucy Hogg**  
Heroic Care Ltd




The Positive Behaviour Support Award  
**Luke Smith**  
Midway Care Group



The Profound & Multiple Learning Disabilities Award  
**M&D Care**



The Lifetime Achievement Award  
**Elaine Cole**  
Focus Care



The Jim Mansell Outstanding Contribution Award  
**Lucy Hogg**  
Heroic Care Ltd




Nominations for the **2024** Awards are now open!  
[www.nationalldawards.co.uk/nominate](http://www.nationalldawards.co.uk/nominate)  
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**NORTH WEST**  
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**WALES**  
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Dates and venues may be subject to change

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





# How to start out on your career in care



**Rebecca Pearson**

General Manager  
Bupa Care Services  
Bupa Global & UK

**It's that time of year when school leavers will be looking to start their career. This can be daunting and it's not unusual to feel overwhelmed, especially if you've just got your exam results and need to make some decisions.**

For people who are looking to make a difference and are looking for flexibility, learning opportunities and a supportive team environment, the care sector can be a great option. But where to start? And what attributes are potential employers looking for? For those who are considering a caring career, here's some advice on getting started.

## Draw on your existing skills

We know that more and more young people are looking for a career that helps them give back, and the care sector is one where you can really have a big impact on people's lives. Being caring and empathetic are key skills which will help you to go a long way, as well as being a good listener and communicator. We're always working to provide the highest quality, person-centred care, so being able to form close working relationships with both colleagues and residents is really important.

And it may seem unexpected but an interest in tech can also come in handy. We're using the latest technology more and more in our care homes, whether that's to record notes on the go, monitor for falls or use online games and apps to have fun.

But don't worry if you think you don't have all the skills you need right away. In our sector there are lots of opportunities to learn as you go, and lots of people who want to help you succeed!

## Learn on the job

The great thing is that many roles in the care sector don't require specific qualifications. When you start a caring role you'll be offered lots of training to help you provide safe care from day one. We can also support you gain academic qualifications, such as GCSEs, apprenticeships leading to diplomas or working towards nursing qualifications.

For people who aren't sure if they want to continue studying or enter the world of work, the care sector provides lots of opportunities to 'earn while you learn'. This means that as well as good pay and benefits, you'll earn transferable skills and qualifications that can set you up for life. The sky really is the limit!

The care sector provides a great starting point wherever you want to take your career, and at Bupa we are really proud that many of our people stay with us and develop their careers over the long term. For example, Helona Begum, one of our care home managers, has been with us since leaving school at 18. She initially came as a care assistant on her gap year and never left. She said:

*"As soon as I walked in, I felt I was part of a team and was valued. With a great culture, positive working environment along with colleagues that had been within the business for such a long time, that really said it all to me. I know I could build a career here."*

## Do your research

When it comes to getting a job in the care sector, doing research into the roles and the company is crucial. And think about what you're looking for too. Is it learning opportunities, a friendly team, a competitive salary or good benefits? Maybe it's all of the above. So it's worth taking your time to find a role that aligns with your own values. At Bupa we welcome people with lots of different experiences and backgrounds – after all our residents are as diverse as we are and it's important that we reflect this diversity in order to provide the best care.

And there's nothing better than doing practical work experience to see what suits you best. You might love caring for others, but you also might enjoy organising events and activities, or find that you would prefer to be in a kitchen environment or spend time outdoors. It's important to try out different roles so you can find out what suits you best.

So whatever your interests and ambitions and whoever you are, the care sector has a role for you.

# Never too early, never too late



Beth Britton

**Beth Britton**  
Trainer and Special Care Consultant

**While we have heard a lot over the years about supporting people to live as well as possible with their dementia, ongoing risk-reduction post-diagnosis hasn't always been a significant feature of those conversations.**

*“Whilst scientific recommendations are always welcome, it's invaluable to understand from people living with dementia.”*

This year's World Alzheimer's Month<sup>1</sup> theme of 'Never too early, never too late' tackles this topic head on, looking at how ongoing risk reduction can benefit people diagnosed with dementia.

For anyone accessing social care at any point in the life course of their dementia, their provider will play a key part in this. With limited pharmacological interventions, building ongoing risk-reduction into an individual's support plans will enable them to benefit from the latest guidance on how to live better from both a medical and social perspective.

## **Ongoing dementia risk-reduction – What is recommended?**

Of the 12 dementia risk factors highlighted by Alzheimer's Disease International, only two (less educational in early life and air pollution) are beyond a care provider's influence.

We can all support people with dementia to remain physically active (in whatever way the person can participate), reduce/quit smoking, reduce alcohol consumption, keep to a healthy weight /reduce obesity, reduce the risks of a head injury (from falls etc), control hypertension and diabetes with good health planning, identify hearing impairment and support the use of hearing aids, provide support to minimise depression (which is often under-diagnosed and poorly understood) and provide intelligent social contact (genuine peer-to-peer engagement with likeminded individuals and relationship-centred support from staff).

As Paola Barbarino, Alzheimer's Disease International CEO, says: *“Addressing these risk factors post-diagnosis empowers individuals towards improving their health and wellbeing, potentially enabling people to live independently for longer. It is #NeverTooLate to start, however, it is always important to consider individual circumstances and discuss those with your doctor.”*

## **What do people living with dementia recommend?**

Whilst scientific recommendations are always welcome, it's invaluable to understand from people living with dementia what they would recommend care providers offer people who are living with dementia and drawing on their services. People with dementia told me:

*“External social contacts are vital, as is outdoors stuff, especially gardening. Most importantly though, ask people living with dementia what they enjoy(ed).”* **George Rook**

*“Find out what each person's hobbies were. Take trips outdoors where there is wildlife and birds. The calmness of nature can be so therapeutic. Crafting with others can be a great way to interact, bringing conversations and laughter.”* **Gail Gregory**

*“For everyone to have the chance to do outdoor activities or just to be outdoors, even in colder months (wrap up warm).”* **Teresa Davies 'Dory'**

*“I'd recommend CBT work using out-of-the-box thinking so that it is adaptable to each person, their age, culture and personal preferences.”* **Julie Hayden**

*“Everyone needs access to music and activities that are meaningful and inclusive.”* **Tommy Dunne BEM**

*“Give people choices, exercise, fun, the chance to be outdoors, activities in the community (not an activity room), physiotherapy and speech therapy if needed.”* **Kate Swaffer**

*“Allow people to feel the outside fresh air and provide outside space for them to sit or walk in no matter whether a member of staff is available or not. Have windows that open and can be sat at to watch the birds outside.”* **Wendy Mitchell**





Source: Livingston et al. A, et al. Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2020 report of the Lancet Commission

[www.alzint.org](http://www.alzint.org)



*"Music would be my recommendation – use our Purple Angel Mp3s<sup>2</sup> which are free for all with dementia in the UK and uploaded with the person's choice of music."* **Norman McNamara**

*"To assist, remind and support, not take over and do everything for us because the more you 'do' the less we will be able to. Find out who we are and tailor services for us, offering stage-appropriate care that is pro-active not re-active."* **Chris Roberts**

### From ongoing risk reduction to cognitive rehabilitation

If ongoing dementia risk reduction is to become a mainstream provision, cognitive rehabilitation is surely the next step to equip people with specific strategies to retain their autonomy in everyday activities, providing a greater sense of hopefulness and emotional well-being as epitomised in 'My Life, My Goals'<sup>3</sup>.

To understand more about this, I spoke to Jackie Pool, Dementia Specialist Occupational Therapist and author of 'From Dementia to Rementia'<sup>4</sup>.

*"Cognitive rehabilitation can be focused to relearn a lost skill or knowledge set, learn new ones and practice compensatory techniques to 'fill in the gap' in the person's abilities. The optimum environment for this learning to take place is one where the person has maximised brain*

*health through good nutrition, hydration, good sleep, pain management, exercise, access to the outdoors and social connections – elements identified through this year's World Alzheimer's Month theme and indeed by the people living with dementia who have contributed to this article."*

***"Building ongoing risk-reduction into an individual's support plan will enable them to live better from both a medical and social perspective."***

- 1 <https://www.alzint.org/get-involved/world-alzheimers-month/>
- 2 <https://purpleangel-global.com/mp3-players/>
- 3 <http://www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/2021/09/my-life-my-goals/>
- 4 <https://www.hachette.co.uk/titles/jackie-pool/from-dementia-to-rementia/9781839973154/>

# Five top tips for creating a sensory garden!

**Sensory gardens are known for being calm and therapeutic spaces, particularly beneficial for people who access social care and find joy in different sensory experiences. As part of Community Integrated Care's exclusive nature workshops in partnership with the RSPB, Jane Taylor, expert from the RSPB, and Victoria Martin, Senior PBS Strategy and Practice Development Manager from Community Integrated Care, shared their advice on creating an affordable and accessible sensory garden. Here's five top tips from the session, on how to get started:**

## Embrace The Senses

# 1

When designing your sensory garden, keep in mind that it's all about the senses! Understand each person's sensory profile to create an environment that isn't overwhelming. Whilst aromatic plants may delight some, they could be too overpowering for others.

It's important to consider all of the senses – as opposed to focusing on the obvious, such as the smell and sight of flowers. For example, you could incorporate diverse textures like bark, water, and grasses for those with a tactile preference.

***Don't forget, if the garden is shared, you'll need to take into account everyone's sensory profiles. This might mean creating different zones that cater to various needs.***

## Individuality Matters

# 2

Gardens are an extension of our homes – therefore, it's important to ensure that the garden you create reflects the individuals that it is designed for. Think about what the purpose of the garden is for them, and what having this space could bring to their lives. What would bring them joy and fulfillment?

***Don't be afraid to be creative. You could include sand pits, blackboards, or even add in vegetable patches to encourage healthy eating.***

## Involve Everyone

# 3

Building a sensory garden can be a wonderful sensory activity itself. Don't miss a great opportunity to get the people you support involved in planning and creating the space.

Get people's opinions on the garden's appearance, plant placement, and arrangement. Go shopping together for plants and accessories. You can even produce easy read labels together, so that people can better understand and care for their garden.



*“It’s important to consider all of the senses – as opposed to focusing on the obvious.”*

4

### **Ensuring Impact All Year Round**

Ensure your garden remains vibrant and interesting throughout the year. Research plants that bloom at different times and consider adding hardy or evergreen shrubs. Visit local garden centers for expert advice. As autumn approaches, plant bulbs in damp soil for a beautiful spring display.

*“Building a sensory garden can be a wonderful sensory activity itself.”*

5

### **It’s About More Than Just Plants**

Lastly, it’s important to remember that creating a sensory garden isn’t solely about plants. Research has shown that, whilst plants and flowers bring a lot of wellbeing benefits, having wildlife in the garden enhances this even further!

Encourage wildlife by creating simple habitats like log piles for bugs or a bird bath using a plant saucer. Supermarkets and discount shops also offer various accessories at affordable prices – for example, mirrors, wind chimes, soft mats, and canopies – that can enhance the sensory experience even further. And if you’re feeling crafty, you could even get creative and build your very own water feature using a pretty bowl and a solar-powered water pump.

Find out more about Community Integrated Care’s partnership with RSPB, WWF, the National Trust and Age Exchange, and download your free guide to creating a sensory garden at

[www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature](http://www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature)

# Not just A.I. and care robots

## Making the most of innovation in adult social care



**Neil Eastwood**  
Founder  
Care Friends

**With his employee referral app Care Friends, operated in partnership with Skills for Care, recently winning the UK's most prestigious innovation award, Neil Eastwood shares his hard-won lessons for harnessing the potential of digital adoption in our sector.**

There is no shortage of technological innovation on offer to care providers in 2023. New applications are emerging which were unheard of just a few months previously. The current poster child is, of course, 'A.I.' (Artificial Intelligence) which you could argue is taking over the mantle from care robots (remember 'Pepper'?). Chat GPT, the most well-known A.I. product so far, only launched on 30th November 2022. But there is a wealth of novel but unsung technologies mostly made up of rather less newsworthy innovations such as digital care records and everything in between.

The Government has, rightly, thrown its weight and some funding behind pump-priming the take-up of technology across a sector that we all recognise must rapidly change simply to survive, as demand for services from an ageing population increases and the workforce becomes harder and harder to find and retain.

But, as someone who has spent the past five years creating, piloting, launching and then scaling a new technology, in our case to empower more care workers to become recruiters, I have come to understand that realising the benefits of innovation requires more than just a product. It depends as much on the humdrum process of continuously listening to users, constant improvements, change management and a significant investment in product support as it does in a compelling concept.

Perhaps unusually, for someone leading an innovative start-up company, I would put myself at the late adopter end of the technology adoption curve – I like to hear a chorus of enthusiastic recommendations from trusted peers that the water is lovely before I jump in with something very new. I suspect that reflects the views of many readers. Early adopters are thought to make up only about 16% of people. I confess to being inherently cautious when considering investing in new technology solutions for use at Care Friends.

A key concern is always whether or not we have the bandwidth to optimise the benefits of the solution rather, as is often the way with new technology, being wooed by all the amazing features but then only making use of 10% of the platform's capability. In addition, the Adult Social Care sector has, through years of regulation and inspection, become hard-wired to be risk avoidant. Not the best starting point for innovation.

So, although we are surrounded by a cornucopia of innovations and most acknowledge we must embrace change and quickly, there is a real risk of widespread underachievement if we aren't careful. A sanguine example of this is Pepper the humanoid robot, which many of you may recall launched to great fanfare in the UK in 2016. Pepper's offer to our sector was to lead recreational exercise sessions with care home residents, freeing staff to perform other duties. But research found it took time to wheel the robot out and boot it up and in many cases care workers had to be on hand to reinforce the instructions. The lack of practicality and effort of day-to-day use, together with a limited repertoire of activities contributed to a lack of adoption in social care settings and production was halted in 2021.

*“Realising the benefits of innovation requires more than just a product.”*

This risk has been at the forefront of my mind all the way through the journey from launching our very first version 1.0 Care Friends employee referral and reward app in 2018, to now tens of thousands of app users across four countries on the current 3.2.14 version. People often comment that, viewed as an observer, the rapid growth of the Care Friends app seems effortless, culminating in this year's King's Award for Innovation and an upcoming NHS pilot. But it is anything but that. It has been, and continues to be, a relentless cycle of testing, feedback and continuous improvement, setbacks and breakthroughs, all with large investments in support infrastructure and the patient backing of the forward-thinking care providers we partner with (and their employees) whose feedback informs and shapes our product roadmap. This is the necessary journey of embedding innovation widely in any market.

So, whilst we stand on the cusp of an era of exciting digital transformation in Adult Social Care, to harness this potential we must never scrimp on the unglamorous effort of listening to, supporting and learning from our users. Putting them at the centre of our thinking is the true path to unlocking the huge promise of innovation in our sector.



# Workplace immigration in social care: Overcoming recruitment challenges



LOCH  
Associates Group  
People are our business

**Joe Milner**  
Partner and Solicitor  
Advocate of Loch Law,  
part of Loch Associates Group

**In an increasingly challenging recruitment market, employers in the UK's social care sector are exploring new avenues, including the possibility of recruiting overseas workers. The idea of widening the search pool to overseas workers has gained traction as a potential solution to address the shortage of skilled professionals in the industry. However, before diving into this, employers need to understand the implications and costs to ensure this is right for them.**

There are two main worker Visa routes for the social care sector that employers can consider when recruiting overseas workers in the UK: the Skilled Worker Route and the Health and Care Worker visa route. Both routes offer overseas workers the opportunity to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK, providing them with long-term stability.

Recruiting through these Visa routes necessitates that employers hold a Sponsorship Licence to support the worker's Visa application. This process typically takes six to twelve weeks for approval. Once granted, the Sponsorship Licence remains valid for four years, providing employers with flexibility in their recruitment of overseas staff. The application for the licence involves an online submission form, providing supporting evidence, and covering relevant information to UK Visas and Immigration. After obtaining the Sponsorship Licence, the employer must assign a Certificate of Sponsorship to each individual, confirming their support for the worker's Visa application. With this certificate,

*“Given the complexity, seeking specialist advice is crucial to ensure compliance and avoid unnecessary delays.”*

*“Despite the challenges, recruiting from abroad can bring numerous benefits to the care sector.”*

the individual can proceed with their Visa application, which may include attending a biometrics appointment and submitting relevant documentary evidence of their status and role at the employer. In some cases, overseas workers may have dependents who wish to join them in the UK. In these situations, the employer may need to assist in arranging Visas for the dependents as well. This can help the overseas worker settle in and be resolved in their move to the UK

Beyond Visa and legal requirements, employers also need to consider the support necessary to help overseas workers integrate seamlessly into their business and the local community. Language barriers, cultural differences, and unfamiliarity with local practices can pose challenges for both the worker and the employer. Therefore, implementing a comprehensive onboarding process with the assistance of a buddy or mentor can significantly aid the integration process. Additionally, a training programme for all staff to appreciate cultural differences can create a more inclusive and positive work environment. Despite the challenges, recruiting from abroad can bring numerous benefits to the care sector. Overseas workers can fill gaps in skills and expertise, which are essential for the success of organisations in this sector. Their diverse backgrounds and fresh perspectives can also contribute to innovative thinking and a vibrant work culture that fosters creativity and growth.

Workplace immigration in the care sector can offer a viable solution to the recruitment challenges faced in the UK. By understanding the various Visa options, obtaining the necessary sponsorship licences, and providing adequate support to overseas workers, employers can harness the potential of overseas workers to build a diverse and skilled workforce that contributes to the success of their organisation. Given the complexity of immigration procedures, seeking specialist advice is crucial to ensure compliance with the correct processes and avoid unnecessary delays. Employers in the care sector should consider engaging the services of specialist immigration solicitors, such as Loch Law, to simplify and streamline the immigration process and to support with ongoing migrant worker compliance.

# Addressing business challenges through international recruitment



**In a bold move to solve a pressing social care problem, Recruit2Care, a UK-based recruitment agency, is revolutionising social care by helping care providers embrace international recruitment opportunities.**

Joe Desmond, the owner and Managing Director of Recruit2Care, is challenging traditional recruitment models by bringing in qualified talent from abroad and helping them adapt and settle in the UK. He recognises that high staff turnover and temporary staff can undermine the quality and consistency of care, a concern especially significant in a sector that is fundamentally about human relationships.

*"The government's £15 million fund to help tackle the barriers of international recruitment is a huge support to the sector, but it presents a challenge as companies struggle to understand how they can use it successfully whilst juggling ever increasing care demands against the very real pastoral responsibilities of hiring a workforce with no cultural experience of living and working in the UK,"* says Joe.

To ensure continuity, reliability, and professionalism in the sector Joe takes a personal and hands-on approach. With a philosophy of "meet and greet," Joe is personally involved in welcoming and guiding every recruit through their transition. This direct involvement ensures that recruits and care companies feel supported, paving the way for better retention and a more committed workforce.

One recent recruit, Fatuma Shamirah who is now working for Your Choice Devon as a Care Worker had this to say about her experience of applying and starting her new role: *"I had a great amazing professional experience throughout my recruitment process. Recruit2care was very professional and communicated throughout the recruitment process until I secured my job and certificate of sponsorship."*

***"Recruit2Care made the funding and recruitment journey seamless."***

While the idea of international recruitment is not new, it does raise some ethical considerations. Critics argue that it could potentially deplete other countries of their skilled workforce. In response, Desmond emphasises that Recruit2Care operates under a strict ethical recruitment policy.

*"We're committed to a win-win approach,"* he says. *"We want to offer opportunities to skilled workers from around the world, but not at the expense of their home countries. We ensure our practices are sustainable and ethical."*

The main aim of embracing this new wave of skilled and qualified employees is to provide the social care sector with the much-needed stability and reliability it needs. A stronger, permanent workforce builds longer-term team and caring relationships. Desmond's strategy aims to reduce reliance on agency staff by focussing on nurturing a committed and permanent workforce providing improved care and an overall increase in care satisfaction.

*"With permanent staff, there's a sense of ownership and dedication that's hard to replicate with agency staff,"* says Joe. *"They become part of the fabric of an organisation and the communities they serve."* This mantra is very much reflected in the feedback from employees Joe engages with.

Gill Holden, Director at AStar Homecare had this to say about their recent experience working with Recruit2Care: *"I can't tell you how grateful we are. Recruit2Care made the funding and recruitment journey seamless. Joe was always professional, always in contact, and innovative in his approach. As an CQC rated Outstanding business we have very high expectations, we were never disappointed with the service we received from Recruit2Care."*

By improving staff retention, Recruit2Care also reduces the cost and disruption associated with frequent hiring and training. The money saved can then be reinvested into the business to improve services or raise wages, creating a virtuous cycle of improvement and stability.

Joe goes on to say: *"Employers inevitably rely on agency and bank staff in the short term to maintain adequate patient care levels. Yet, by investing in international recruitment for the long term, these expenses can be substantially lowered in the future."*

*"While there are inherent costs tied to international recruitment – notably the Immigration Skills Charge – these expenses are offset within a mere 12 weeks when juxtaposed with the costs of employing agency staff."*

*"Our clients trust us to provide caregivers who are reliable, committed, and professional."*



*“With a philosophy of ‘meet and greet,’ Joe is personally involved in welcoming and guiding every recruit through their transition.”*

By selecting such individuals, Recruit2Care assures that its clients receive the best possible care, thereby improving the reputation of the social care sector as a whole.

Ultimately, Recruit2Care’s international recruitment strategy is all about ensuring the continuity of service. The social care sector is a crucial pillar of our society, and its efficiency and effectiveness can significantly impact the quality of life for many. By reducing reliance on agency staff and improving retention rates, Recruit2Care is laying the groundwork for a more stable, reliable, and caring social care system.

In a sector often defined by its challenges, Recruit2Care is carving a new path, demonstrating that ethical, international recruitment and a commitment to permanent, reliable staff can deliver much-needed stability and quality to the field of social care.

Joe concludes; “We believe our personal approach to international recruitment has made Recruit2Care a beacon of light in an industry marked by frequent change and unpredictability. It’s a responsibility we take very seriously; we know that to get care right the team has to be right too. The role of the team goes beyond the usual business metrics of productivity and efficiency. If the team is well-qualified, motivated, and works together effectively, the chances of better-quality care provision increases significantly. That’s got to be worth investing in!”

[www.recruit2care.co.uk](http://www.recruit2care.co.uk)

 Recruit2Care

**Joe Desmond**  
Owner and Managing Director  
Recruit2Care

# Financial efficiency: Small changes that solve the biggest problems



**Hollie Vickers**  
Senior Product Marketing Manager  
Soldo

**There's a storm brewing over Social Care. According to Hollie Vickers, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Soldo, the clouds started gathering long before the pandemic.**

Yes, demand for Social Care is at an all-time high. Yes, funding has reached a worrying low. And yes, there's currently a staff shortage. But, for Hollie, these are simply the latest in a long line of challenges.

The storm originated in the fundamentally flawed systems and processes that have never, and will never, set those working in social care up for success.

The solution? Small changes that chip away at the bigger problem. And that starts, Hollie says, with finance teams finding ways to be more efficient.

### Stepping into the role of unpaid carer

Hollie shares these views not as an onlooker, but as someone with years of deeply personal experience in the sector. First, she cared for her uncle as he battled cancer. And now, she cares for her mum alongside professional carers. Staff shortages mean Hollie is regularly called on to cover shifts when there are simply no carers available.

*"I've had to learn the hard way the intricacies of navigating the social care sector. The amount of admin I have to deal with on a weekly basis is excessive" she explains. The system just isn't working for anyone. Not for service users, carers, or providers. And because of that, a huge amount of pressure falls on families. They call us informal or unpaid carers."*

### Change starts with financial efficiency

Hollie believes that inefficiencies, at all levels, contribute to a lack of capacity to deal with demand. And that finance teams have to be at the forefront of changing what she describes as a pen-to-paper way of thinking and doing things.

*"Finance teams have the greatest potential to drive positive change in social care. They're in the best place to look at technology, their ways of working, and their processes to get things moving and working better. If you can get your finances right and work in a more effective and efficient way, that will in turn create that capacity that helps the people on the ground. Even a 5% uplift makes a big difference."*

### Where Soldo and social care intersect

Hollie knows firsthand that the financial structures in Social Care are complicated.

She sees Soldo as a way to make sense of that by enabling finance teams to track every type of spend, categorise it effectively, and report on it easily. By combining company cards with a management platform, Soldo can be used to organise budgets, control spending, make payments, and create reports.

*"Soldo helps finance teams find that capacity to do more with what they have. They can bring the budget to life, see it through, execute it, embed it, and keep track of it month-by-month. When it comes to audit time, all the hard work has already been done. Things are nicely tied up and linked to budgets, funds are segregated – kept separate in different pots. When staff use Soldo cards to buy what they need, there are no question marks, lost receipts, or trying to work out who spent what where. Everything is visible in real-time."*


### Small changes solve big problems

As Social Care accelerates toward breaking point, Hollie sees hope in a cloud-by-cloud approach – rather than attempting to banish the entire storm.

*"The sector needs to ask: what are the ways that we can make a difference? What small changes will chip away at that bigger problem bit by bit? Soldo isn't going to solve the social care crisis, but what it can absolutely do is make incremental differences day-to-day at all different levels. There are amazing people in this sector trying to do their best, but they're not set up for success. If things don't change, you're going to lose them for good."*

**WEBINAR** On-Demand from 27 September 2023, 11am BST

## Auditability and financial control: Social Care's path ahead



Care Talk is co-hosting an on-demand webinar with Soldo from 27 September at 11am BST where industry experts will explore these themes of audit-proofing and financial control even further. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/Soldo-Care-Talk-Webinar>





**This month,**  
*Kirsty meets...*

**Hannah Montgomery**  
Co-founder,  
Grace Cares



**Each month I meet key stakeholders and business leaders in the social care sector. This month I met Hannah Montgomery, Co-Founder at Grace Cares. I caught up with Hannah to discuss sustainability in social care, and supporting local communities.**

**So Hannah, can you tell us a little bit about Grace Cares?**

Grace Cares is a not-for-profit that wants to stop care items needlessly going into landfill, making them available to people for around a third of the price, then using the profits to help care workers, older people and their families nationwide with hardship grants and support the local community with social groups and activities.

*“Social care activities protect and save lives but what about the impact to health and lives from the waste and by-products we generate?”*

**Why is sustainability important within social care specifically?**

In 2019 the UK became the first major economy to pass the net zero emissions law enabling the government to set a UK commitment to sustainability that has to be met by 2050.

It is evident that the social care sector is a significant contributor to carbon emissions and other forms of environmental impact. Our sector uses large amounts of energy, equipment, and resources to provide care, which can lead to waste and pollution. Think about it, social care activities protect and restore health and save lives BUT what about the impact to health and lives from the waste and by-products we generate?

**What is the state of sustainability within the social care sector at the moment?**

Providers I have been talking to are not fully aware of the changes that are around the corner or are overwhelmed by sustainability. With rising costs and environmental changes, we personally and commercially need to be more waste and carbon aware. It's a company culture

change on all levels, which is a scary thought when the sector is trying to carry on post covid, recruitment is still challenging, and we are waiting for the roll out of a new regulatory framework. So how on earth are care providers meant to learn and adapt processes to be more sustainable at the same time?

It is a lot. You can't make changes too quickly and take your eye off the ball in other areas, it's all about compound effect: juggling improving and commercial viability.

**What does the future of social care sustainability look like?**

The government are driving this as they forecast that damage by climate change will cost the UK economy £20 billion by 2050. The CQC frameworks will also be looking at environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

My advice would be to pull together a working group of managers, carers and service users who all have a passion for sustainability and create an initial sustainability and net zero plan.

As a starting point I would recommend exploring: Environmental Compliance, Waste Reduction and Recycling, Energy Conservation, Water Conservation, Sustainable Transport, Green Procurement, Community Engagement and Awareness, Continuous Improvement, Reporting and Accountability. Book in a regular group catch up and action just one point off the plan each time. By adopting sustainable practices, supporting the workforce, engaging service users, and collaborating, social care providers can work towards a more sustainable, cost effective, higher revenue generating and resilient future.

**And finally Hannah, where can we find out a little more about Grace Cares?**

There's loads of information and our sustainable pre-loved care equipment shop on [www.grace-cares.com](http://www.grace-cares.com). I have also created a How and Why proposal and information on how to improve sustainability processes that your readers can access by scanning the QR code.



**Kirsty Hollins** Communications Executive, Care Talk

# Care Talk

## Business

Sharing business excellence in social care

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



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

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# Care Consultancy Ltd

## Our Services

### **Crisis Management**

Working with providers in maintaining compliance. Working with administrators and insolvency teams to help manage and guide you through a difficult time.

### **Quality Assurance**

Working with services to ensure they provide high quality care. Supporting providers to maintain Good standards of care and work toward Outstanding.

### **Mock Inspections**

To assist services in preparing for regulatory inspection and ensure standards are maintained to a high standard.

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Supporting both providers and staff in working to the highest standard whilst keeping up with regulatory changes.

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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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