

# CareTalk

The voice of excellence in social care

Let's Talk Social Care! Issue **118** | February **2023**

# The Future of Social Care

# 2023

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ABOUT  
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SOCIAL CARE!**

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Chief Nurse,  
Adult Social Care



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Senior Fellow,  
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Co-Chair,  
All-Party Parliamentary  
Group on Dementia

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■ GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT: PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN SOCIAL CARE

■ ENSURING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE ■ BREAKING THE BIAS: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL CARE



## Circulation List

Has this month's Care Talk  
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- ☐ Care Staff
- ☐ Ancillary Staff
- ☐ Service Users
- ☐ Families

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

2023 is the Year of the Rabbit, a symbol of prosperity and peace. So, at a time of unprecedented geopolitical and economic turmoil will the Year of the Rabbit finally bring us some peace and hope for the future?

*The future of social care* is the theme of this, the first issue of the year, featuring some thought provoking insights from our esteemed contributors.

In her article, **This year let's shout about nursing in social care!** (page 8) Prof Deborah Sturdy, Chief Nurse Adult Social Care, outlines the opportunities for nursing in social care and her ambition for the entire profession to become even louder and even more diverse.

**Ambition and Optimism for 2023**, is the theme of Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England. In her article (page 18) Dame Rachel tells us why she is optimistic that a truly child centred care system can be achieved through the energy and dedication of care professionals and by ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard.

Simon Bottery, Senior Fellow for Social Care at The King's Fund writes with slightly less optimism in his no-holds-barred article. Turn to page 7 to read Simon's frank analysis of the sector, concluding that **Workforce is the main but not the only concern for social care**.

So, what are your hopes and visions for this year? Do let us know and as ever do keep your news, views and suggestions coming in. Care Talk strives to be a voice for social care and our greatest contributors are our readers.

Enjoy this issue.

Lisa





# The future of social care



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

**The future of social care is precarious. Successive governments have seen social care only in the context of its subsidiary relationship to the NHS. Over many years, they have ignored the need for fundamental reform and for significant extra resources to be put into the system.**

*“We need to make social care a destination of choice for people at various points in their careers.”*

This has led to many challenges, not least our ability to retain and recruit staff to deliver high-quality and complex care. The staff in social care are real professionals, and they certainly showed this during the pandemic, when their level of skills, knowledge and commitment was very evident. It is quite clear that people in our sector are driven by values and work in this sector in order to make a difference in people's lives rather than because they can earn money. The way in which successive governments have played upon the commitment of social care staff is quite shameful, and we need to rewrite our approach to how we train, reward, and respect our colleagues in social care in order to deliver a sustainable future.

If you look at the makeup of the social care workforce, many people will be retiring from their roles within the next five years. One of the things it is vital that we do is to think about how we attract both younger people into our sector and also how we make it an attractive sector for people who want to move careers at the midpoint in their working life. It must be remembered that it is not only money that drives some of these people to think about career changes. It is often the need for more flexibility and a better work-life balance, as well as the feeling that you are doing something that is making a difference to people's lives.

In order to attract both new entrances into our sector and those who are making career moves, we need to do the following. Firstly, we need a very clear skills and competency framework and a set of portable qualifications this will give people a real understanding of how they can progress in their careers. We also need some very clear career pathways and some good examples of people who have entered social care and have built really good careers in the sector. I am sure

that Skills For Care would be more than able to develop this comprehensive approach to qualifications, and what we need is for the government to give them the resources and free them up to redefine the training and development structures in our sector.

In order to attract people who are making midpoint career moves and transferring from other sectors, we need to have some understanding of how we can recognise some of the qualifications that they have and also have some training that will transfer them from where they are into the social care sector.

Another thing that we need to do is to get our current workforce to be ambassadors and champions for our sector and encourage people they know to join our workforce. Neil Eastwood has written extensively on this issue and has some great insights for employers on how to both retain current staff and also attract new ones.

What gives me confidence about the future is not what the government will do; rather, it is because of the resources and talent that we have within our sector. I have seen some great examples of organisations that have developed innovative and creative ideas on how to both recruit and retain their staff. In an economy where there is nearly full employment, we have got to think differently about how we attract new people and how we retain our current colleagues. We also need to be fishing in different pools of talent and making sure that social care is a destination of choice for people at various points in their careers.

Many people have had caring responsibilities and who could make an enormous contribution to our sector, but who, for various other reasons, might not want to work full, or indeed part-time, but who could give a number of shifts to service and really help to establish a pool of people who could be used to fill gaps. There is a huge problem with agencies working in our sector, and the cost of this is spiralling to unsustainable levels. It is for this reason that we need to develop new ways of attracting and retaining our staff and think about how we create our own pool of talent rather than having to go to expensive outside organisations to acquire it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way in which many people work, and our sector needs to modernise its approach and think about how it can use technology and different work patterns as ways of attracting new entrance to our sector and retaining those who have already shown their commitment through the global pandemic.

*“Many people will be retiring from their roles within the next five years.”*

@ProfMartinGreen @CareEngland

# Thriving Not Surviving

Care England 2023 Conference & Exhibition

Thursday 16 March 2023

Church House Conference Centre, Westminster, London



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

Visit the Care England website for up to date Information.

## Exhibition and seminars: Learn from the specialists

Engage with 40 leading product and service suppliers in the exhibition and choose from 12 seminars in the afternoon session. Find out more about their contribution to the successful delivery of quality care.

## A conference for the whole sector

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

## How much does it cost to attend?

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

**We look forward to seeing you there!**

For more information, visit [www.careengland.org.uk](http://www.careengland.org.uk)

**#CareEnglandConf23 #ThrivingNotSurviving**



# Workforce is the main but not only concern for social care



TheKing'sFund

**Simon Bottery**

Senior Fellow, Social Care  
The King's Fund

**The former Prime Minister Tony Blair famously said his priorities for government were 'education, education, education'. Ask a care provider about their priorities at the moment and you are most likely to be told 'workforce, workforce, workforce'.**

***"Social care providers still struggle to get their feet in the door of ICSs."***

The increase in vacancies in the sector has been dramatic and unprecedented. In October 2022, the vacancy rate was estimated by Skills for Care at 11.2%, up from the already record level of 10.7% for 2021/22. The rate a decade ago in 2012/13 was just 3.8%.

The social care sector can't operate effectively with so many posts unfilled and there have been major implications for people who draw on services, who are now struggling to get their care they need, and for the NHS, which has been struggling to discharge patients from hospital, in part because of the lack of social care capacity.

Despite this, the government shows little willingness to tackle the key underlying issue behind the vacancy rate – pay. During a cost of living crisis, and with low unemployment in the rest of the economy, who can blame social care workers for voting with their feet and taking better paid, less demanding roles in sectors like retail?

Workforce, however, is by no means the only issue facing the sector. The most obvious other problem is charging reform – or rather the lack of it. The government had promised to bring in new measures to limit the impact of 'catastrophic' costs on individuals needing care with the introduction of a lifetime 'cap' on care costs, and to extend the means test so that more people would

be entitled to some state support. But those reforms vanished (or, officially, were postponed for two years) in the financial rescue act by Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak following the calamitous Truss/Kwarteng 'fiscal event' in September.

With the postponement of charging reform also went measures to tackle another key problem for the sector – the low fees paid by local authorities to care homes and home care agencies. Much-vaunted 'fair cost of care' reforms were postponed, leaving providers still concerned that the rates they receive – at a time of soaring inflation – do not sufficiently cover their costs. The local authorities who commission services share these concerns, with 94% of social care directors believing that funding is insufficient to meet provider costs over the winter.

Other measures in the Autumn Statement, with additional funding provided to local authorities for social care, may alleviate those concerns somewhat, if the money finds its way to the right places, but does little to revise an impression of a government that has lost its way after those Johnson-era Downing Street promises to 'fix' social care.

Certainly it has done little to tackle the big trend in social care since 2015/16, which has seen more and more people approaching local authorities for social care help but fewer of them receiving long-term care support as a consequence. Nor has there been any significant increase in help for the unpaid family carers who all too often have to pick up the slack when state support is wanting.

Even progress on integration seems unclear. The welcome introduction of integrated care systems came into force in 2022, offering local authorities the chance of a real say in local systems. But social care providers still struggle to get their feet in the door of ICSs.

Overall, social care policy is a mess, with little sign of New Year improvement.

# This year let's shout about nursing in social care!



**Deborah Sturdy CBE**  
Chief Nurse Adult Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care

**After one of the longest periods of disruption and uncertainty any of us have experienced in our lifetimes, I hope 2023 will at last see life return to a more normal pace. We need the time and space to think about the future and how we make the most of new opportunities to improve care and support.**

2022, though challenging, saw our profession achieve its highest profile in years. As we see the first cohort of social care nurses from the global majority undertake bespoke leadership training, I am delighted we are building a voice for colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds.

This year, I want the voice of the entire profession to become even louder, even more diverse. If we are not at the table, how can we influence? That's why we are setting up professional nursing councils in every integrated care system (ICS) in England. We need to offer our care sector insights to clinical nursing leaders, be myth busters and advocate strongly for pragmatic, practical and person-centred solutions.

We need social care nurses and the wider workforce from small and large organisations from large, small and medium sized services - and from across all specialisms - to chair these councils. I can help create opportunities like these, but we need people to fill seats and be voices of professional and creative challenge. Get in touch if you want to be part of this exciting endeavour. It's a golden CPD opportunity, with the potential to really influence the design and delivery of integrated services.

Meanwhile, we continue to expand our research agenda, working with the National Institute of Health and Social Care Research (NIHR) to launch new opportunities for social care nursing, build our evidence base and exercise even greater influence, backed by data.

***"This year, I want the voice of the entire profession to become even louder, even more diverse."***

***"We are setting up professional nursing councils in every ICS in England."***

At the same time, Skills for Care is working toward the launch of the Careers in Social Care platform. I want to build on this initiative and develop resources to help us learn and share best practice around retention and recruitment.

We will also see the results of the work the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) is leading to create standards for social care nursing, including the opportunity for specialist practitioner qualifications (SPQ) to be recordable on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register. I have been working with the NMC on an induction for all members of the 'fitness to practice' panel to make sure they understand the context and role of social care nursing, as it is currently made up of nurses from settings other than care. We need more social care nurses active in NMC roles.

More broadly, I want to see the growth and development of advanced social care practice. Our skills, experience and knowledge are exceptional. We must continue to invest in these qualities.

Last year was also about shining a light on sector specialisms. We held a roundtable for learning disability nurses late 2022, hosted by Skills for Care, and I hope this year we will learn more about their work and also of those in less prominent roles, including those working in mental health, drug, alcohol and complex care services.

Critical to the success of everything I've mentioned will be the development of the knowledge and skills framework for all professional care staff. As we look to the expansion of delegated healthcare, such frameworks will become even more essential.

2023 must be the year when the experience, knowledge and skill sets of social care colleagues take centre stage. This means being valued by individuals, communities and the health and care professionals we work alongside. In this spirit of mutual respect and collaboration, we will build a better future together.





# The next generation of care workers



**Oonagh Smyth**  
CEO  
Skills for Care

**As the new year begins, it's time to think about what we need from social care not just this year, but in the years to come.**

***“Conversations with educators tell us that young people are looking for a career where they can make a difference.”***

Data from Skills for Care's 'State of the adult social care sector and workforce in England' report show that vacancy rates across adult social care are the highest on record, having risen 52% between 2020/21 to 2021/22. At the same time the number of filled posts, meaning roles with a person working in them, has fallen. This shows a need to think about filling social care roles now, but data also highlights what we need to consider for the future.

28% of the adult social care workforce is currently aged 55 and over. This means a high percentage of the workforce may consider retiring in the next 10 to 20 years. So, we need to think now about attracting the next generation of care workers who will fill these roles.

Specifically, we need to think about how we attract younger people to build a career in care and grow the workforce of the future. To sustain the level of care and support required to allow everyone to live the lives they want in the future, we need to attract younger people into care roles now and keep them for the long-term.

We know that many of the people working in social care find it a very rewarding career, allowing them to make a

difference in people's lives. The person-centred nature of working in care is often what attracts people to start and stay working in social care roles.

This is what we need to highlight to the younger generation.

Conversations we've had with people who work closely with young people and educators tell us that young people are looking for a career where they can make a difference.

They want work/life balance, flexibility about where and when they work, and the chance to do the things they are passionate about. Social care roles offer all of this, and this is what we must highlight to attract the next generation of carers.

Younger people are also keen to progress in their careers and to be seen as professionals, this is why we must work at all levels to create awareness of the skilled social care workforce and the vital work that they do for our communities.

We must consider what the next generation of carers need to learn and understand to effectively build a career in care. This will include utilising their existing digital skills. Taking a values-based approach to recruitment will ensure that we are recruiting people with the right values and behaviours to provide care and support. Training that focuses on different areas of person-centred care and which provides specialist knowledge around areas such as dementia will be key in preparing the workforce of the future.

For 2023 and beyond I hope we can keep having conversations – louder and more often – that showcase the value of working in care and positions the social care sector as a profession which is held in esteem by everyone.

The 'People at the heart of care' white paper had commitments to investing in knowledge, skills, health and wellbeing, and recruitment policies to improve social care as a long-term career choice. The implementation of the commitments in that white paper have never been more important so that we can start to build the foundations to ensure that we have the workforce that we need now and in the future.

# Can this be a Happy New Year for home care?



Agincare  
Caring in your community

**Raina Summerson**

CEO  
Agincare

**We start 2023 with ongoing uncertainty in social care, though this is nothing new for those of us who have worked in it for many years. Agincare provides an extensive range of care services covering home care and extra care, live-in care, training, supported living and care home but within this a huge variety of projects and high number of different partners. As such, we often find that demand for different services will ebb and flow, along with the specific opportunities or threats associated with each model of care delivery.**

Home care finished 2022 in a particularly difficult place, not due to lack of demand for what it provides but due to ongoing workforce challenges that increased with multiple factors impacting through the year. These included the cost of living, driving people to different employment or a reduction in working hours to manage childcare costs, (let's not forget that as across social care, home care workers tend to be female and work part-time). Other factors included fuel costs rocketing and car ownership becoming more difficult, especially for younger workers, and a move to more fluid work choices which give flexibility to work from home, as opposed to in someone's home.

The big rise in National Living Wage due in April 2023 is welcomed for the workforce, though there remain calls for a higher rate to be introduced for social care to differentiate it from competitor sectors such as hospitality and retail. However, such huge rises in costs across the provision of home care simply have to be met and this is placing huge pressure on under-funded local authority partners, the NHS and indeed people who are paying for their own care.

***"Home care finished 2022 in a particularly difficult place."***

The demand for people to remain in their own homes continues, both in policy and personal preference. As the Social Care Future (@socfuture) movement strapline starts 'We all want to live in the place we call home...' But the means to do this are becoming depleted each day through the lack of action and real change in social care. Reforms come and go, the situation worsens for many people across the country, borne in doom and gloom headlines with Skills for Care reporting 165,000 staff vacancies (up by a staggering 55,000 vacancies from the previous year), Local Government Association reports of increasing inability to meet needs and balance budgets, charities running out of steam and cash, and care provider failure.

So, can this be a Happy New Year for home care? For Agincare, recruitment and retention has seen some recent glimmers of hope, driven partly by our ongoing commitment to investing in our people programme and all that entails, partly by some changes afoot in society. Some great partnership working, with councils and NHS and people who draw on our services, shows that if we can work better together, we can make the best of scarce resources and do some innovative and exciting work that attracts and retains teams. And, as true care can do so well, this enables people to live as independently as possible and free up allocation of resources to go forward and support elsewhere.

In this changing landscape, with invariably more complex care needs being supported and often shorter periods of working alongside people, our home care teams need more support than ever in juggling various demands placed on them. Well-being, learning and development and recognition remain a priority, both internally as an organisation and through driving better external recognition and reward across society.

PM Rishi Sunak in his first speech of the year set out a five point plan for 2023, and included priority number four, 'NHS waiting lists will fall and people will get the care they need more quickly.'

As I write traditional winter pressures on the NHS are taking grip driven by exceptionally high numbers of flu and Covid cases. It highlights that the pivotal role of social care as part of a fully functional, funded and holistic health and care system has never been more needed. And if not now in 2023, then when?

***"Demand for different services will ebb and flow, along with the specific opportunities or threats."***



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2023

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# Who are the new generation of carers?



**Jonathan Freeman MBE**  
CEO  
CareTech Foundation

**We are all part of a family and community structure that is evolving and changing. The social care sector has got to adapt and reflect these changes if it is to provide the service that our communities and our society have a right to expect.**

The rate at which the UK population is aging means that in 25 years' time some 2.6 million people will be over 85 years old! All signs indicate that the number of people that will need a carer will also increase; estimates suggest that two out of three of us will have to care for someone in our family at some point in our lives. Caring for a relative is a responsibility most of us will happily accept; but if you are unable to provide this care within your family, you will need to rely on external support in your home or in a care home.

Statistical evidence shows all too clearly that there is a huge recruitment crisis in the social care sector across the UK, with up to 163,000 vacancies in any given month. So, just where will the UK find its next generation of care professionals? Many providers, thanks to Government changes, are now recruiting extensively from overseas. And that is absolutely fine by me, reflecting the UK's history of welcoming the positive contribution of those from different cultures and traditions. But, a big part of the solution is also closer to home because the vast majority of these care professionals are already here in the UK, if only we opened our eyes a little wider!

The CareTech Foundation recently launched a partnership with Breaking Barriers, a charity that exists so that every refugee can access meaningful employment and build a new life. The specialist charity supports refugees into employment with advice, experience and education.

*"The majority of care professionals are already here in the UK, if only we opened our eyes!"*

*"Refugees can enhance the diversity of caring teams."*

Our partnership aims to reduce the high unemployment rates among refugees and help to decrease the vacancy rates in the health and social care sector. It also aims to develop a bespoke career pathway for refugees to work in the social care sector. Breaking Barriers' clients have expressed an interest in working in social care; indeed, social care is one of the top career choices of refugees supported by Breaking Barriers. The charity will play an instrumental role in bringing in a new type of carer.

Refugees come from a diverse range of backgrounds and speak a range of languages. This means they can enhance the diversity of caring teams, both in terms of demographic but also the skills and experience they bring. For example, Breaking Barriers clients are aged between 18–68 and come from 60+ different countries.

Refugees have also often experienced extensive periods of instability so are more likely to seek secure and long-term employment, something that might help to improve staff retention rates in the social care sector.

One of Breaking Barriers' clients, an asylum-seeker who worked in an elderly care home for five years in Russia, said: *"This is a much-needed job with a lot of responsibility, as there are a lot of elderly and disabled people in need of care. Social protection in my country is not as developed as in the UK. Therefore, I think this is a promising job, with potential for career growth. To be a good carer you need empathy, being considerate, always being friendly, keeping nursing home residents' information confidential and maintaining the dignity of nursing home residents."*

Organisations should aim to adapt their recruitment process to develop clear pathways for refugees. Through the Foundation, Breaking Barriers and the CareTech Group have been working to develop a bespoke pathway into social care sector employment. This process develops existing channels to remove barriers which may place clients at a disadvantage. The responsibility taken on by both organisations shows their appetite to ensure that recruitment pathways for refugees interested in care sector employment remain fair, appropriate and values-based.



It is clear that attracting refugees is a huge opportunity for the social care sector. It is well-documented that people from diverse backgrounds are more likely to stay in a position where they feel valued.

If we are to tackle the staffing crisis in the social care sector, the sector needs to appreciate that part of the potential solution to this problem is right in front of us! A proportion of the next generation of carers could be found from the refugee population. We have a crisis, we need to solve it and this could be part of the solution. And in doing so, we can provide fantastic careers to those who so deserve the opportunity to re-build their lives. Let's not waste any more time! We need more care sector organisations to step up and provide bespoke pathways for refugees – so, let's all work together to try to help solve this problem once and for all!

**@jonathanfreeman**

***“Attracting refugees  
is a huge opportunity  
for the social care sector.”***





# Introducing registration for greater recognition



**Karolina Gerlich**  
CEO  
The Care Workers Charity

**Social Care is in crisis in the UK. No one reading a publication such as Care Talk would find this statement a surprise. The sector is feeling the strain of the past few years but there is not enough funding available to enable a full recovery.**

At some point in our lives, most of us will need to rely on social care. Be it through parents, grandparents, drawing on care ourselves or working in the sector.

The government needs to provide the right level of funding to ensure that there are enough staff to meet the rising demand for social care. The vacancy rate is 11% - higher than the NHS, and almost triple the average rate in the UK. By allowing this crisis to continue, they are not only causing issues for care workers but also for those who draw on social care in all varieties. The money that has been recently announced to support hospital discharge is very welcome, but nowhere near enough.

Social care is not just a place for people who need to leave hospital. It is a critical part of society which needs radical reform. In order to encourage more people to become care workers, and stay in the sector long term, we need better workforce data, planning and professionalisation and we need to recognise care workers' Valuable contribution to society.

Introducing compulsory registration for English social care workers, as is already in place in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, would be an important first step to achieving this.

*"It is hard not to feel like our 'covid heroes' have quickly been demoted in minds, budgets and plans."*

*"Introducing compulsory registration for English social care workers, would be an important first step."*

This will do two things.

**1. It will show that care workers are professionals and should be paid, respected, and treated as such.**

**It will regulate all training and education of the workforce allowing care workers to be proud of their training and skills and to easily display them when applying for jobs increasing confidence for care workers and confidence for those who hire them.**

**It will also allow care workers to be part of something as a whole and not just within their own organisation.**

**And crucially, it will support better workforce data.**

**2. Having a registered and regulated workforce means that if the standards are not met, action can be taken therefore giving recruiters and managers back up to uphold standards and support when things go wrong and improving quality of service to those who draw on social care.**

The social care workforce in the UK employs more people than the NHS but it is the forgotten workforce – people don't often think about care until they need it. It seems much harder to get behind and support than its health care equivalent. But care workers are struggling to cope on low wages during a cost of living of crisis in a sector that is still recovering from the impact Covid. We have provided £4.3m in grants to nearly 7000 care workers and yet we still cannot raise enough money to keep up with demand.

It is hard not to feel like our "covid heroes" have quickly been demoted in minds, budgets, and plans. And without a workforce how can social care have a future at all?

# A mixed picture for ICSs



**CCN**  
COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

**Jon Rallings**

Senior Policy Advisor  
for Adult Social Care  
County Councils Network

**As 2022 becomes 2023, the newly created Integrated Care Systems (ICS) which came into existence last summer are set to become a more normalised part of the health and social care landscape.**

These bodies replaced Clinical Commissioning Groups and were a welcome recognition from the government that health and social care are two sides of the same coin and that closer integration between the two will help solve challenges in both parts of the health system.

Designed to create a step change in integration and to try and ensure a more preventative local health system is created, the formation of ICSs were treated with optimism from the County Councils Network's (CCN) member councils. They recognised this as chance to build closer relationships with NHS partners and drive integration and transformation to a much greater extent than their precursors.

But with all restructures, the litmus test is how well they work in practice. To assess these burgeoning relationships, the CCN commissioned a report from IMPOWER which was published late last year and offered the first stock-take on ICSs from a local government perspective. The report reflects extensive surveys and interviews with local authorities in as well as consultations with NHS colleagues.

As alluded to above, most interviewees from both sectors showed clear enthusiasm for ICSs. Four-fifths of councils said that they had increased their time working with health partners since the summer and have said that they have invested significant time into their ICS. But there is a danger that this optimism soon evaporates. The survey found that there is a mixed picture on how well ICSs have worked and performed in the first few months.

*“There is still too much of a focus on the NHS rather than a longer-term focus on integration and prevention.”*

*“The survey found that there is a mixed picture on how well ICSs have worked and performed.”*

This is perhaps unsurprising when considering how few ICS boundaries align with those of local authorities. Just four councils share coterminous boundaries, with some counties spread across as many as three ICSs, tripling the bureaucracy and making a consistent county-wide offer almost impossible. Whilst some authorities are developing positive place-based arrangements to overcome these, or share seamless boundaries, others feel mired in this bureaucracy.

In addition, with only 9 of the 91 local government appointees to Integrated Care Boards (ICB) being elected councillors, there is not necessarily the right balance in decision making, with the local government respondents in the report suggesting there is still too much of a focus on immediate NHS pressures rather than a longer-term focus on integration and prevention.

This is crucial. For the potential of ICSs to be maximised social care needs to be recognised as a valuable service in its own right and not just in how it supports the NHS. Simply, ICSs need to think strategically in the long-term about how a well-functioning social care system will take pressure off the NHS through prevention, rather than only addressing short-term issues like hospital discharges.

We have a window in time where some small steps can help change the perception of ICSs from local government and to enable relationships to take root.

The government has already commissioned a review of ICSs, led by Patricia Hewitt. We were pleased that CCN's chairman Cllr Tim Oliver (who is also chair of Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership) was invited onto the review team and we will await her findings in March, but many in local government will be buoyed by her recent comments which suggested there was still too much 'top down' working within ICSs.

I encourage colleagues within the health service to take a look at the report – there is a vast amount of knowledge from both NHS and local government that can be fused together to create better health outcomes – with social care getting the focus it needs in ICSs and ultimately reducing pressure on health service in the long run.

Read the IMPOWER report at <http://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/download/4641/>



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# Why we need a People Plan for social care ... A manager's perspective



**Sam Evans**  
Care Manager

**Working as a care manager for 25 years in a company looking after over 500 clients with just over 100 carers, I've dealt with the pressures of the care sector firsthand. During Covid, we didn't have any time off and had to source PPE ourselves, because our priority was keeping people safe, but this came at the cost of not giving people the time and care they deserved. National guidelines suggested we give people just 15 minutes – barely enough time to get someone up and dressed, let alone washed or given a hot meal – and I'd had enough.**

I've since gone out on my own, leading my own care company where we can give people hour long visits. Now a lot of my time with clients is spent on social activities and enriching their lives – like taking someone to visit MacLaren because they loved fast cars or staying with someone for a weekend, playing music and going for walks, to allow their family a much-needed break. But sadly, care workers in big companies are working against the clock, and simply don't have enough time to give someone that extra care which gives quality to the few years or months they might have left.

A cross-party group of MPs, supported by Alzheimer's Society, reported last year that over a quarter of people affected by dementia didn't feel involved in planning the care they received, and less than half felt care staff had a good understanding of dementia. I know from training new carers that they're eager to learn and thrive in their career, but a lack of progression, low pay and long working hours means many are forced out of an industry they entered with high hopes. As a manager

*“Over a quarter of people affected by dementia didn't feel involved in planning the care they received.”*

I used to source dementia training for carers, but this isn't the norm – companies prioritise training on moving and handling, food safety and medication over dementia or mental health, due to a lack of time and funding, even though most people they care for are living with dementia.

Sadly, care workers just aren't recognised in the same way other healthcare workers are. There's also a misunderstanding about who needs social care. Everyone understands what the NHS is there for – they may have gone into hospital for an operation for example – but not everyone understands that if someone has dementia, it's social care looking after them rather than the NHS. And you can see that the social care system is broken when ambulances are waiting outside hospitals for beds currently filled with people desperate for a care package. Given our failure to prioritise social care like our healthcare system, it's no surprise care vacancies sit at 165,000 – the highest number to date.

Alzheimer's Society have called for a People Plan for social care, which would focus on better pay, career progression and mandatory training. I've met so many talented, hardworking care workers in nearly thirty years working in the sector. The system is failing them and by extension it fails everyone who needs to access social care. But change is possible, and by recruiting and retaining staff, who feel recognised for the quality work they do, we can make sure that people with dementia get the personalised care which lets them lead the lives they want.

*“Companies prioritise training on moving and handling, food safety and medication over dementia.”*

Link to the APPG on Dementia's report Workforce Matters: Putting people affected by dementia at the heart of care.

[https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/APPG on Dementia Workforce Matters Report 2022.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/APPG%20on%20Dementia%20Workforce%20Matters%20Report%202022.pdf)



# Ambition and optimism for 2023



Children's  
COMMISSIONER

**Dame Rachel de Souza**

The Children's Commissioner  
for England

**When I last wrote, I made *ambition* my watchword for 2022. That is no less true as I write now, at the start of another new year, but I want to add another word to that for 2023: *optimism*.**

It might seem like an oddly cheery word to use at a time when many vital public services have been hit by strikes, living costs are rising and children are among those who have been hardest hit – particularly those in or leaving care.


The reason I use the word is because I believe 2023 will bring opportunities to create a care system that makes every young person who interacts with it feel safe, cared for and stable – as long as we listen hard and listen properly to what these young people themselves tell us about the barriers to overcome.

One of these is the opportunity to reflect a positive vision of family in public policy – and reflecting breadth and variety of families in this country. At the end of last year, I published the second and final part of my independent Family Review, which set out how we can better support the needs of families and children, building on findings from the first part which spoke of the protective nature of family.

Public policy tends to focus on the many challenges families face, including conflict and poverty. Reframing this to put strong families at the heart of policymaking will embed these strengths and characteristics into the services there to support children who cannot live with their birth families, by providing a meaningful alternative that offers the same kind of familial, consistent relationship.

***“Government and policymakers often shy away from recognising the role of family in improving outcomes.”***





It's what young people in care told me they want in their responses to The Big Ask survey when I first took office: a stable and nurturing home, and strong, loving relationships with people who care about them – including, importantly, their sibling relationships. I'll be examining how to strengthen sibling relationships across the care system in the coming weeks, as well as setting out my recommendations to make sure children in care have the kind of home environment that is equipped to fully meet their needs up to the age of 18, not just 16.

Government and policymakers often shy away from recognising the role of family in improving outcomes – but we are already seeing promising signs that this is changing. The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in his first speech of the year setting out his priorities for the year ahead, said: *"Family runs right through our vision of a better future."*

That brings me to another opportunity coming up this year, which as I write is imminent: the Government's full response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. It will set out a plan that offers support to families earlier on, working to prevent escalation and ultimately improving outcomes. This plan needs to be as ambitious for children in or leaving care as they are for themselves, and to replicate the feeling of family support in the system so that every child who interacts with it feels safe, loved and stable. I know that is an ambition that the many dedicated professionals I've spoken to over the course of my work echo.

***"2023 will bring opportunities to create a caresystem that makes every young person who interacts with it feel safe."***

The opportunities that my Help at Hand service continues to provide for children and young people also gives me cause for optimism. Since becoming Children's Commissioner, it has supported more than a thousand children at their most acute moments.

In the last quarter of 2022, Help at Hand saw a significant rise in cases – but only reaches a fraction of the young people it could help. My office and I have been speaking to children and care leavers about what they want from the service and how to make it more accessible – and we owe it to them not just to listen, but to act on this.

As one care leaver told us: *"I don't think there's anything else I could have wished for; I just feel like it's a really good service and I found it really helpful and [...] it gives you backup and it's really good to have that."* – Help at Hand Annual Report and Review, November 2022.]

***"Young people in care told me they want a stable and nurturing home."***

Finally, I am optimistic because I see the commitment and energy of those working in the care system, despite the challenges, but also of young care experienced people themselves. I'm excited to be creating a care experienced advisory board this year, to make sure that all of my work is informed by their voices and views.

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# 2023: the year of integrations



**Sarah Jenkins**  
Marketing Executive  
Nourish

**Integrations are the hot topic of 2023. From integrating with technology to Integrated Care Systems (ICS'), integration it seems is inevitable for health and social care.**

At Nourish, we thrive on integration. We work with the best technology partners on all aspects of digital care management, becoming an ecosystem of care. It is essential to partner with leading technology providers and combine our expertise to give care providers the very best technology to kick start their digital care planning.

We choose to partner with technology providers who share a common vision, who like us are dedicated to driving collaborative and evidence led solutions within Health and Social Care. We want to harness our joint expertise to find new exciting solutions with undeniable benefits. For our integrations, our focus is the outcome for the people being supported and how the integration will assist them. Integrations we currently support are:

- Medication Management
- Preventative Care and Chronic Disease Management
- Pain Management
- Personal Wellbeing & Falls Prevention
- Incident Management
- Care Administration and Workforce Management
- NHS systems such as GP Connect

Integrated Care Systems are partnerships of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services, and to improve the lives of people who live and work in their area. ICS' aims to integrate health care from social care to the NHS, connecting systems and care providers for a seamless approach to digital healthcare. A digital deadline combined with funding from the Department of Health and Social Care is seeing more care services than ever embracing digital care planning. We have helped many care services apply for funding – we'll put you in touch with the right person from your ICS and help you complete the necessary documents to secure the maximum funding available.

The benefits of digital are clear. Having an overview of your entire service in one place ensures that any and all changes are visible at any time. For key areas such as falls, data can be analysed and acted upon, reducing the number of falls and hospital admissions. Reducing the number of falls will lessen hospital admissions, reducing pressure on the NHS.



Integrations such as GP Connect and the Emergency Admission Pack feature encourage a seamless process between health services. GP Connect allows care providers to see prescriptions and GP records of the people they support to ensure a full overview of previous care that will shape the care they will receive. The Emergency Admission Pack promotes a smooth transition for admissions and discharge, ensuring that the essential information follows the person supported from one service to another. Speeding up processes ensures that those receiving care will receive the care most appropriate for them at a much quicker pace.

Using a digital care planning platform saves money on paper and stationery, at Nourish, care providers we partner with found that 95% of managers saved up to £2000 a year on stationery expenses and 65% of care services saved up to 100 sheets of paper every week. Recording care notes digitally saves time for care teams, allowing more time for face-to-face person-centred care and to implement more wellbeing-centred care in the form of outings and activities. Whittingham House, part of LCCL, found that by using Nourish they saved 20 minutes per week per carer. With 10 carers on the floor, this works out at 200 minutes per week – just over 3 hours of time saved that can be reallocated back to the people they support.

*“We choose to partner with technology providers who share a common vision.”*

Nourish Care provides an easy to use digital care planning platform to care services in a wide variety of care settings from nursing, elderly care, learning disability and more. Trusted by over 2,800 care services, Nourish works with independent homes supporting less than five people to care groups supporting over 10,000 people. With Nourish, care and support teams can plan, record and coordinate care on our desktop app and on the go via our mobile app which can be securely accessed by staff at any time, anywhere.

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



# Nursing the nation through Covid-19



Liz Whyte

*Social Care Covid Hero*

**When nurse Liz Whyte began her career 33 years ago, care home residents would park up in the car park and walk through the doors to their rooms and maybe pop out to town on the bus later.**

*“Wasn’t she petrified of making decisions in the dark for 50,000 people?”*

Much has changed and in so many ways, not least for Liz herself.

Fast forward the years and during the pandemic, Liz became Covid-19 Lead making decisions for the residents of approximately 300 care homes. A hugely challenging time, she realised very quickly that clarity and reassurance were desperately needed.

So Liz took this on.

But wasn't she petrified of making decisions in the dark for 50,000 people?

*“We were fortunate to get onto a number of government working party groups to be part of a lot of policy and guidance from the ground up. And when testing came in, we were asked if we wanted to be part of it, so we led through that, helping set guidance for testing. After all these years in the sector, for me it was a very different role but I was oddly energised by the fact that you just had to do something.”*

Liz found herself at the very forefront of our national decision-making, helping to shape response and procedure at a critical time. But she's quick to add how lots of people in the organisation rose to very many challenges because business as usual went out of the window. She lost count of the number of times the guidance changed across the three countries and the headaches that caused.

How did she cope with such a mammoth responsibility?

*“I think I’m naturally quite bossy and at times - certainly entering into a pandemic - you need someone a bit like that! Someone able to make very quick decisions. I can get a job done when it needs doing. And it certainly needed that at times. I was also very fortunate that my daughter, partner and grandson moved in with me. I think if they hadn’t, I would have found it really really*

*hard. And yet I feel guilty saying all this as I know many people didn’t see grandchildren and families. Oh, and I got a lockdown puppy, all of which gave me balance.”*

It's self evident that Liz has a voice and she's listened to which is great for the sector moving forward because she's not going to quit banging drums:

*Staff in care homes in England are still having to wear masks which definitely puts people off especially when it's for a 12 hour shift. We're campaigning for changes to this because it's different in Scotland and Wales. Also, if vaccinations and boosters are the key to it never returning, we're not doing enough to support people with them in our sector. Basically, if you want social care staff to be vaccinated and boosted then bring it to them! Make it easier for them!”*

So does Liz think we are better equipped to deal with another pandemic?

*“It’s questionable, isn’t it? I’m now working with the Vivaldi Team around infection management regarding future potential pandemics. For example, was lockdown even the right thing to do? Decisions need to be backed up with research. So, one of the good things about having a voice is the ability to influence guidance and policy. Rather than feeling you are being done to, you are able to say if this is what you want to happen, this is how to do it.”*

People talk about the values gained from nursing training that never leave you - the innate desire to make sure people are looked after. This particular nurse has a voice we should all want to hear more from.



Debra Mehta

# Keeping creative is a piece of cake!



Staff and residents at The Grange 2016 Ltd

## Social Care Covid Hero

**As a nation, we've perhaps never been so overloaded with statistics as we have in the last few years due to Covid-19: absolute truckloads we've taken on board and then doubtless forgotten some hours later. It's our nature, to a large degree. But here's one I think worth remembering:**

CQC analysis revealed a 134 per cent increase in deaths of people with a learning disability, or autistic adults, between 10th April and 15th May 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

Of course, the health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities are no secret within this sector and whilst they were being left behind yet again during the pandemic, the winners of The Children & Young People Awards, Covid Hero Team Award fought for change...and won.

Managing Director of The Grange 2016 Ltd, Sarah Edwards, explained that when the vaccinations started rolling out, and were for the over 80s initially, people with Down's Syndrome were not considered as clinically vulnerable, so they contacted their local MP in Kent, Helen Grant:

*"Actually, we already had a link because before the pandemic, our registered manager had contacted her about safeguarding processes and how improvements could be made with, for example, the police to make sure that adults with a learning disability are prioritised, listened to and represented. Fighting from several angles, we also contacted GP services and commissioners to say we should be prioritised. We didn't hear back but then received a call to say we were to be one of the first, if not the first, care homes for people with learning disabilities to receive the vaccinations for both staff and residents."*



Sarah and her team are rightly proud of such a landmark but, of course, they didn't just win the award for this: they were ahead of the curve with intense preparations for a potential lockdown regarding workforce impact, shielding and residents' wellbeing.

Many residents had been working in a community coffee shop so Sarah came up with the idea to quickly convert a junk dump cabin in the garden into a coffee shop which everyone helped design, paint and create. A charity donated funds for a coffee machine and a fridge and it very soon became a vital hub space:

*"The purpose was to provide people with escape from the main house and somewhere they could go. But just as important was providing an opportunity for them to continue what they were doing in the community by serving customers, managing stock control and counting out money. The idea of the shop and cafe just grew and grew - some people baked cakes and familiar routines were able to be maintained - things that were important to them."*

***"The idea of the shop and cafe just grew and grew - some people baked cakes and familiar routines were able to be maintained."***

Sarah and her team endlessly came up with sassy, creative ways of compensating for what their residents lost out on during this time all alongside championing their safety and right to priority.

And what might this national award mean for a small provider?

*"It's very special. We're all so proud of it! It has given us an opportunity to promote ourselves - Come and work for our National Award Winning Team! Look at how creative we are! We've done an incredible piece of work and achieved so much and now we need to learn to live with the virus. And yes, it's challenging, but we need to get back to some sort of normal."*

Ultimately, people with a learning disability really do have so much to give to their community and for the future I want the public to really know that."

Not sure I'd in any way call Sarah and her team normal...



Debra Mehta



# Climbing a ladder of excellence



Nicola Hall



**Nicola Hall's track record is impressive. Back in 2007 Nicola started her journey in care, working as a PA to the Care Home Manager at Ben Care's Birch Hill Care home in Northumberland. In fifteen years Nicola's commitment to providing exceptional care has propelled her career, and she is now Care Home Manager at Ben Care's flagship Care Centre, Lynwood Court in Ascot.**

*"Life at Lynwood Court has been transformed for residents, thanks to Nicola."*

During her time at Birch Hill, Nicola quickly identified what great care looks like, and as she took on more responsibility, was able to put her ideas in to practice, developing this home to become one of the best in the area. Her passion for providing truly individualised care, along with implementing specialist dementia training for staff and residents resulted in Birch Hill being awarded 'Outstanding' by CQC in 2018.

Nicola is now Care Home Manager at Lynwood Court where she is applying the same principles and passion which helped her achieve the Outstanding rating at Birch Hill.

Life at Lynwood Court has been transformed for residents, thanks to Nicola, as she has championed the Ben Care Best Lives Model standard of care, incentivising, and motivating her colleagues. From this foundation of care excellence, Nicola is also improving team structures, and enhancing the environment which will provide residents with a dementia garden, walkway, and communal cafe. From the moment you arrive at Lynwood Court you can see how at-home the residents are.

Within her first six months of managing Lynwood Court, Nicola has already increased occupancy from 70% to over 90%. By restructuring the enquiries process Lynwood Court was able to assess and efficiently onboard more residents. For both care homes Nicola has had a strong impact on resident and relatives' satisfaction, scoring 9.9/10 for Birch Hill on carehome.co.uk and contributing to the Lynwood Court current score of 9.6/10.

*"Working for Ben Care is such a privilege," explains Nicola. "Career progression is a real focus for us. I am testament to that, and we extend our development opportunities to all our colleagues."*

Nicola says that at Ben Care talent is recognised with resident care at the forefront of all decisions made.

*"We use training programmes for colleagues, but more than that, we ensure that every team member is the best version of themselves. It is an absolute pleasure working alongside the team and ensuring that we do make that difference to residents every day."*

By developing the team through the training programmes at Ben Care and ensuring standards of care are the very best they can be, Nicola and her team have transformed the care home into a real home from home for residents. Nicola has big plans at Lynwood Court, a vision created from the experience she has gained from her varied roles within Ben Care. From the early days in care administration through to successful management of a large care home, Nicola knows first-hand what matters to residents and the important role that the care teams have in delivering this level of excellence. Nicola and her team remain focused on recruiting, retaining, and developing the best people through recognition programmes and by fostering a vibrant environment for residents and staff.



*"Lynwood Court really is going places," says Nicola's manager Lorraine Lynch, Head of Care Services.*

*"Thanks to Nicola's fresh approach, we've been able to rapidly build on successes and it just feels like a friendly place to be. We're proud to hear from relatives that they're delighted with how their loved one is cared for. We're enormously proud of Nicola, and now as a finalist at the Great British Care Awards (South East), Nicola is receiving the recognition she deserves for her hard work and dedication to residents and colleagues at Ben Care."*



# Paving the way for better pay



## Philippa Stannard

Head of Fundraising & Communications  
Autism at Kingwood for  
#BetterPay4SocialCare



**'Unprecedented' was a much-used word at the onset of the pandemic, as social care providers flew**

**into action to provide the best possible response and care for those they supported.**

But it was the frontline support and care workers who continued to provide compassionate support, risking their health for others.

The pandemic shone a light on social care, demonstrating just how much the nation relied on our support workers. It also brought attention to fact that support workers were not given the rate of pay that they deserve, as they fulfilled their role to the people they support, and to society.

Autism at Kingwood Head of Fundraising and Communications, Philippa Stannard, and Kate Allen, the then Chief Executive of Autism at Kingwood, wanted to raise awareness around this, but the challenge was that many would assume that pay rate lay at the door of the social care providers. However, over a decade of austerity has seen public spending on adult social care provision fall significantly in real terms – and this reduction has been passed on to social care providers.



In the summer of 2020, Philippa planned the campaign #BetterPay4SocialCare, calling on central government to increase funding to local authorities, to be passed on to social care providers so that frontline support workers would receive a minimum of the Real Living Wage (RLW) (the amount calculated by the Real Living Wage Foundation as the minimum hourly rate to live on).

Setting up a #BetterPay4SocialCare web page, Philippa contacted social care providers to support and collaborate on the campaign. With the support of membership organisations, the 29 collaborating organisations represented 400+ social care providers.

Regular Teams meetings enabled the campaign to take shape in terms of online activities and events, culminating in the hand-over of a petition with over £10k signature to HM Treasury in November 2021, ahead of Rishi Sunak's budget.

#BetterPay4SocialCare joined the Future Social Care Coalition (FSCC), a powerhouse of former Health Ministers and experts, contributing to the Social Care People Plan. This called on social care reform and parity of esteem with the NHS in terms of pay, training, and funding. Philippa and Kate attended a FSCC fringe meeting at the Conservative Party Conference, arguing the #BetterPay4SocialCare case.

At this time, the RLW was £9.50 per hour (£10.85 in London); providers reliant on statutory funding generally couldn't pay this rate, with most support workers receiving around the National Living Wage (NLW). The November budget did see an increase of the NLW to £9.50 from April 2022 (but of course so did the RLW increase).

***"With the support of membership organisations, the 29 collaborating organisations represented 400+ social care providers."***

Social care providers were reliant on local authorities to provide an uplift in hourly rate payments to fund the increased National Living Wage. However, local authority increases are arbitrary; Autism at Kingwood received between 3-6%, less than the increase it needed to find to pay the NLW. Many organisations received less. Organisations were (are) losing talented support workers because of pay, and so forced to over-rely on expensive agency workers, not good for people supported or the financial health of providers.

Moving forward, local authorities and the Local Government Association are important allies. It is in their interest to support the campaign; the last thing they want are contracts returned to them because providers can't afford to continue. Where is their person-centeredness? The sector needs significant local authority uplifts. Next April's National Living Wage increase necessitates an increase of 10%. But, to pay enough to attract and retain great talent and drive down agency use, we need closer to a 30%. This should be the focus of the next phase of campaigning.



# Wedded to care



Lian Pearsall



**So, here's a tricky one: what does a Wedding Co-ordinator have in common with the Hospitality Services Manager at Hallmark's Greenhill Manor care home?**

Struggling?

Okay...it's Great British Care Award nominee, Lian Pearsall.

Over the years, I've heard of many unusual routes into the care sector, but Lian's sounds like a first: she started working in a small country hotel as a barmaid, then moved onto reception and then became their Wedding Co-ordinator - a role she held for six years.

Having never met one, I had to know if it's the cutest job on the planet:

*"Well, it's very glamorous, isn't it! A wedding is one of the biggest days in people's lives - something you remember forever. And they have invested so much time and money with such hopes for starting a new life together and you think, oh gosh, if I mess this up, they'll remember me forever too! But yes, all the weddings were different and all lovely. It was just great to watch love! I always felt so proud to have helped make their day so special."*

And so, as I imagined, Lian would meet with couples during planning and then arrange everything including the ceremony, the food and accommodation, being there on the day from first thing in the morning setting everything up till two or three in the morning, shutting the bar down and putting everyone in taxis on their merry way.

It's clearly therefore a job requiring supreme organisational and people skills plus meticulous attention to detail so I'm not surprised in the least that she was perfect for the job of Hospitality Services Manager at Greenhill Manor, but how did she make that move?

*"Well, I had experience with a family member who was diagnosed with dementia and one day I was driving to work and I just didn't feel the passion and excitement anymore. I think it all began to feel a bit dramatic*

*when you think there are people out there who are going through terrible times. So I went into care in the community working for a few weeks and then applied to Greenhill Manor as a bank care assistant and receptionist simply from a throwaway comment from a friend who said they were hiring!"*



Chance - right time, right place - so often plays a part in how we move through life, I reckon.

After a couple of years, Lian became Hospitality Services Manager, responsible for the domestic, kitchen, garden and maintenance teams and clearly thrived in that environment. So how might the roles be similar?

*"With Hallmark, we say we want residents to have a hotel experience in a home environment. So when you're doing a wedding, you want everything to be perfect - it's the same here. And it's building relationships all the time, ensuring the teams understand the importance of what they're doing and why. For example, we have some residents who may not come out of their room very often, so the domestic assistant going in to clean for 20 or 30 minutes provides the perfect opportunity to have a quality engagement with that resident - to have a chat which might be the highlight of their day. For both roles, you have to have attention to detail, and absolutely have a good team. But this job has a lot more meaning. We have some people here who are really quite poorly and this is now their home and it makes me feel good that I'm doing all I can for them."*

Lian speaks with the quiet wisdom of someone who has not only passionately helped the people starting out on life's journey but now also those who have lived it and are nearing its end. A chance moment might have led her to this point in her own journey, but as the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: what lies behind us, and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us...

STOP PRESS: Lian got married last November and yep, she planned and arranged everything herself, of course!

***"When you're doing a wedding, you want everything to be perfect - it's the same here."***



Debra Mehta



# Social Care TOP 30

RECOGNISING INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN SOCIAL CARE

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

# Who's top of the social care charts?

NOMINATE NOW  
FOR 2023 AWARDS!



CARE TALK IS LOOKING FOR CEOs AND OTHER  
SECTOR LEADERS WHO ARE INFLUENTIAL  
MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN THE SOCIAL CARE  
SECTOR WITH A NATIONAL PLATFORM INCLUDING:

People who have the vision to improve  
developments and outcomes in the sector

People who have made a significant  
difference in our sector

Someone who is a strong leader  
in their field to improve services

Key influencers and decision  
makers in the sector

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Contact  
[kirsty@  
care-awards.co.uk](mailto:kirsty@care-awards.co.uk)  
for details

## HOW TO NOMINATE

Please send your nominations by email, together with a 100 word statement, as to why you think they should make the SOCIAL CARE TOP 30, to [kirsty@care-awards.co.uk](mailto:kirsty@care-awards.co.uk)

## SHORTLISTED SOCIAL CARE TOP 30 – READERS VOTE!

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

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

**DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO FITS THIS DESCRIPTION?**

NOMINATE AT: [www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30](http://www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30)

[www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30](http://www.caretalk.co.uk/sct30)







**Debbie Abrahams MP**  
Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary  
Group on Dementia



## WHAT KEEPS ME



## AWAKE AT NIGHT

## Debbie Abrahams MP

Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia

**As we ring in the New Year, I am struggling to recall a time when our health and social care system has been in such a crisis. Having worked in the NHS for 20 years before I became a Member of Parliament in 2011, I have seen my fair share of issues, but these pale in comparison to what we're seeing now.**

My recent casework has reflected the issues the system is facing, and I wanted to share a rather personal story as an example of this.

My 88-year-old mother-in-law, Cynthia, who was cared for at home by her youngest daughter, had been off her food for a few days after what we thought was a stomach bug. A few days before Christmas, she started vomiting blood and although Cynthia never complained, we knew she was in pain. The out of hours GP told us to take her to A&E at Royal Oldham, 'because she'll be waiting hours for an ambulance'. As we approached A&E, we saw what he meant – 12 or so ambulances waiting outside with the queue disappearing around the corner. This of course meant that if the ambulances were waiting to deliver their patients, they couldn't attend other emergency calls.

Once Cynthia was there, she was immediately triaged, but there were dozens of people waiting, sitting on the floor, waiting in wheelchairs and on trolleys. When Cynthia went into cardiac arrest, she was quickly resuscitated. But even before the ED doctor spoke to the family, we knew Cynthia needed palliative care. The hospital staff were magnificent and accommodated our rather large family as best as they could with patience, courtesy and respect. Their kindness and compassion were remarkable given the pressures they faced with very poorly patients lying on gurneys, drips and monitors in tow, at the side of every corridor.

*"I worry that the different cultures, different funding regimes and inadequate funding, mean these issues will continue for some time."*

*"I have seen my fair share of issues, but these pale in comparison to what we're seeing now."*

Approximately 18 hours after Cynthia first arrived at Royal Oldham, she was admitted to a ward. Again, the staff were fantastic. Cynthia died a few hours later surrounded by her loving family. We all got to say our goodbyes to her.

We know that thousands of people are attending A&E every day, having had to wait hours for an ambulance after a fall or because they're too poorly or don't have anyone to take them by car. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine have stated that somewhere between 300 and 500 people are dying each week as a result of delays and problems with urgent and emergency care.

A key driver of the crisis we're seeing in urgent and emergency care is the long-standing crisis in social care. The lack of capacity in social care - staff, care packages, and ultimately funding - means medically fit patients can't be discharged into the community to free up the acute beds that are needed to admit poorly patients into hospital.

The infant Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) are better equipped in some places where health and social care stakeholders have already been working well together. But I do worry that the different cultures, the different funding regimes and particularly the inadequate levels of social care funding, pushed back yet again in the Autumn Statement, mean that the issues we are seeing now will continue for some time. This is what keeps me awake at night.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia inquiry into the social care, 'Workforce Matters', which I chaired, reflected on this. There's a lot we can do to improve care, but we can't get away from the fact that there needs to be significant investment into social care to enable this to happen.

Debbie Abrahams FFPH is a Member of Parliament for Oldham East and Saddleworth and Co-Chair of the APPG on Dementia





## ASK THE EXPERTS

# “What should the Government’s New Year’s Resolutions be for Social Care?”

“People with learning disabilities and autistic people should have the right to live the “gloriously ordinary life.”



**Clive Parry**  
Director  
ARC England

### Learning Disabilities & Autism

“Most providers will speak about a wish for the work they do to be given the value it deserves. It’s a call to understand the importance of what providers and their staff do every day for the people supported in services, their families and wider society. It is about lifting up and celebrating the people who have kept the sector working during a period of unprecedented challenge. People with learning disabilities and autistic people should have the right to live the “gloriously ordinary life” that the recent House of Lords report describes, but year upon year of underfunding their services means that, for many, this is simply not possible. Valuing what we do is also about funding learning disability and autism services so that these can operate sustainably. This includes generating the reasonable surpluses necessary to pay for essential developments so that supported people live lives in which they can make real choices and get the kind of support they need and say they want. The ask therefore from ARC England and our members is that in 2023, the Government commits to funding reform for the learning disability and autism service sector and to fixing the impact of over a decade of cuts to Local Authority budgets.”

“Secondary investment via the NHS and Local Authorities has not worked and will never work.”



**Nadra Ahmend OBE**  
Executive Chairman  
National Care Association

### Residential and Nursing Homes

“We know that the nation is in the grip of an economic crisis which will take some time to unravel. Post Covid some poor decisions have been made and confidence in this government and politics in general is low. What the government must do is to look at their track record of promises and see the devastating impact of those that have been consistently broken. This year has to be the year that the government must resolve to invest in social care in a way that makes a difference. Secondary investment via the NHS and Local Authorities has not worked and will never work if we are seriously looking at ‘fixing’ social care. It is seldom social care provision who benefit from the headline grabbing announcements made! Government must resolve to ensure that funding for social care reaches the frontline of our services; and it needs to be sustainable enabling providers to continue to innovate and invest in the future of supporting those who need care and support. So, their resolution must be to invest in social care which will enable the NHS to return to providing acute care which is their primary role. This year has to be the year to take a leap forward to ensure that those who need care and support can access it when they need it.”



## ASK THE EXPERTS

**Social Care has had a torrid time over the last few years, to say the least. As we enter 2023 with cautious optimism, we asked a group of stakeholders representing different areas of social care, “What should Government’s New Year’s Resolutions be for Social Care?”**



**Dr Jane Townson OBE**  
CEO  
Homecare Association



*“We need to shift the demand curve by supporting people to live well at home and flourish in their communities.”*

### Home Care

“The Government must resolve to stop burying its head in the sand and start addressing the needs of our rapidly ageing population. When my great-grandmother was born in 1879 there were only 60,000 people over 85. By mid-2016, there were 1.6 million people aged 85 years and over (2% of the total population); by mid-2041 this is projected to double to 3.2 million (4%) and by 2066 to treble, when there will be 5.1 million people over 85, representing 7% of the total population. Crammed emergency departments, ambulance queues and a waiting list of 7.2 million signal the UK’s lack of preparedness for this long-predicted demographic change. If we cannot cope now, what will it be like in 30 years’ time? We need to shift the demand curve by supporting people to live well at home and flourish in their communities, rather than waiting for crisis and blue-lighting people to hospital. Greater investment is needed in homecare and community support to grow and develop the workforce and innovate, so we can improve quality of life, extend healthy life expectancy, reduce inequalities, take pressure off the NHS, reduce costs for the health and care system, and support economic growth.”



**Clenton Farquharson MBE**  
Chair  
Think Local Act Personal

*“Measures of performance should be better at capturing the experience and outcomes of people.”*

### Expert Through Lived Experience

“The Government’s New Year resolution for this year should be to show resolve. We have had a white paper for over a year, and whilst it was never going to ‘fix’ social care, its reaffirmation of the Care Act with its emphasis on wellbeing was welcome. Whilst the care cap is paused, there is still much to be done to make good on the commitment to expand choice and control for people who draw on care and support. The opportunity should be taken to ‘go again’ with direct payments. Numbers are going down, and whilst not right for everyone, we haven’t reached a natural ceiling. If there is less restriction on how they are used there will be more demand, particularly if linked to encouraging innovative models of care and support rooted in people’s lives and communities. The government should also ‘do it big’ on co-producing its policy implementation with people who draw on care and support, as the recent House of Lords Social Care Committee’s report, ‘A gloriously ordinary life’ so clearly argued. This should extend to designing measures of performance that are better at capturing the experience and outcomes of people, which I call ‘human indicators’. Finally, the government should commit to intentional action to improve fairness and access to social care, so that no one is left behind.”



# Calling all senior leaders of excellence to social care!

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

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

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

## AWARDS CATEGORIES:

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

## Finalists join top leaders and decision makers in social care!

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

Nominate online at: [www.caretalk-business.co.uk/scps](http://www.caretalk-business.co.uk/scps)  
**Closing date for nominations 31st July 2023**

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...

### **Great British Care Awards Finals**

**17th March 2023** The ICC, Birmingham

### **The National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards**

**Northern Ireland - 9th March 2023**

Hilton, Belfast

**England & Scotland - 30th June 2023**

The ICC, Birmingham

### **The Housing With Care Awards**

**9th June 2023** Marriott Regents Park, London

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

**27th October 2023** The ICC, Birmingham

### **Social Care Top 30 Awards**

**Autumn 2023** Central London

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

**Autumn 2023** Hilton Bankside London

### **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

**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

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



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The National  
Children &  
Young People  
Awards

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL CARE

The ICC, Birmingham  
27th October, 2023

Small things  
make a **BIG** difference

### Categories

THE EMPLOYER AWARD ★ THE NEWCOMER AWARD ★ THE SUPPORT WORKER AWARD

THE KEY WORKER AWARD ★ THE CHILDREN'S HOME MANAGER AWARD

THE CHILDREN'S HOME TEAM AWARD ★ THE FOSTER CARER AWARD

THE FOSTERING & ADOPTION AWARD ★ THE WELLBEING AWARD ★ THE BIGGEST IMPACT AWARD

THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES SOCIAL WORKER AWARD ★ THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AWARD

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AWARD ★ THE LEAVING CARE AWARD

THE PARTNERSHIP WORKING AWARD ★ THE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION AWARD

THE YOUNG CARER AWARD ★ THE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION AWARD

Help us pay tribute to the unsung heroes of our sector



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

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★

# Clearcare Solutions announced as headline sponsor for Children & Young People Awards 2023



**Philip McVay**  
Managing Director  
Clearcare Solutions

**Clearcare is delighted to be the headline sponsor for this prestigious awards ceremony, celebrating the best within the sector. The team and I are extremely proud to work with many of these providers which is why we are so keen to support these awards.**

*"The one constant in all of this change is the support workers that give up such a significant part of themselves to work in the sector."*

Having worked in Children's Social Care for 26 years I have witnessed a lot of change, The shift between local authority and private sector commissioning, regulatory change, and the very, very slow emergence of the digital age!

Not to mention the escalating number of children coming into the care system, and the increased level of criticism rightly and wrongly aimed at providers. The majority of providers and workforce deserve only praise, gratitude, and recognition for what I think is the one of the most challenging but definitely one of the best jobs in the world.

The one constant in all of this change is people, placement teams, providers, social workers, home managers, and of course the support workers that give up such a significant part of themselves and their lives to work in the Social Care sector.

These awards are here to recognise the unsung heroes. Hopefully this will fuel the enthusiasm needed for individuals to excel in very high expectation workplaces. To teach, train and inspire the current and future workforce with the same passion, knowledge and determinism to continue making positive differences in the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

I am looking forward to reading the stories of the nominees and celebrating the many achievements of all involved.



*"The majority of providers and workforce deserve only praise, gratitude, and recognition."*

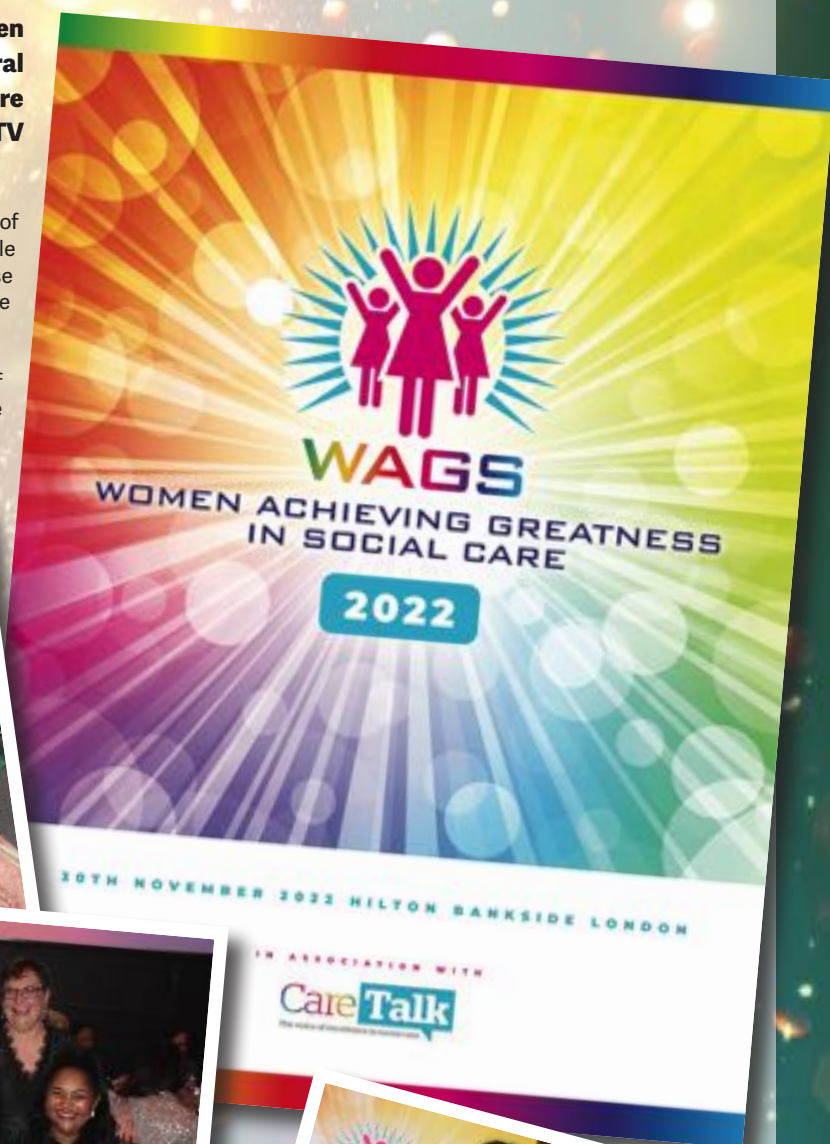


# Girl Power in abundance at the inaugural Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards

**30th November last year saw over 450 women come together to celebrate the inaugural Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards, with inspirational woman and TV personality, Julia Bradbury.**

Over 85% of the social care workforce is female. Many of these hard working, dedicated and talented women juggle the challenges of family life with their career. The purpose of awards is to promote gender equity and celebrate the incredible achievements of our female leaders.

The awards recognised accomplishments at all levels of leadership and from across the whole of the social care sector; including services for older people, people with learning disabilities and/or autism and children, young people and families.





# Meet The Winners!



## THE CARE HOME BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Sam Hawker**  
Managing Director  
AbleCare Homes



## THE HOME CARE BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Raina Summerson**  
CEO  
Agincare Group



## THE CORPORATE LEADER AWARD

**Ann Holt**  
Director of Adult Care  
Salutem Care & Education



## THE GIRL POWER AWARD

**Karen Cooper**  
Manager, Greensleeves Homes Trust  
Lavender Fields



## THE GIRL POWER TEAM AWARD

**The People Team**  
Majesticare



## THE THIRD SECTOR LEADER AWARD

**Kari Gerstheimer**  
CEO and Founder  
Access Social Care



## THE RISING STAR AWARD (CARE HOME)

**Donna Barks**  
Registered Manager  
Canford Healthcare



## THE RISING STAR AWARD (HOME CARE)

**Roberta Chapman**  
Franchise Owner & Registered Manager  
Blossom Home Care



## THE RISING STAR AWARD (LEARNING DISABILITIES, AUTISM & MENTAL HEALTH)

**Margaret Kamara**  
Assistant Locality Manager  
Dimensions



## THE RISING STAR AWARD (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE)

**Hayley Bell**  
Senior Registered Manager  
Exceptional Care Ltd



## THE COMMUNICATIONS GURU AWARD

**Philippa Stannard**  
Head of Fundraising & Communications  
Autism at Kingwood



## THE EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AWARD

**Tricia Pereira**  
Director of Operations  
Skills for Care



## THE HR & RECRUITER AWARD

**Claire Leake**  
People Director  
National Care Group



## THE INSPIRATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARD

**Chloe Liddle**  
Volunteer  
Making Space



## THE OUTSTANDING PARTNER AWARD

**Mei-Ling Huang**  
Partner  
RWK Goodman



## THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT AWARD

**Marisa Spice**  
Learning & Development Manager  
Nellsar



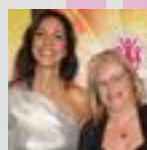
## THE WELLBEING AT WORK AWARD

**Jade Vallance**  
Director of Care  
Active Prospects



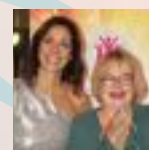
## THE WOMAN IN TECH AWARD

**Katie Thorn**  
Project Lead  
Digital Social Care



## THE SOCIAL CARE CHANGE AGENT AWARD

**Belinda Schwer**  
CEO, Centre for Adults' Social Care Advice,  
Information and Dispute Resolution



## THE SOCIAL CARE SUPERWOMAN AWARD (CARE HOME)

**Helen Rushton**  
Home Director, Lexicon Healthcare



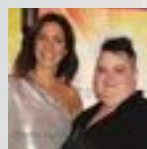
## THE SOCIAL CARE SUPERWOMAN AWARD (HOME CARE)

**Kim Nicholson**  
Regional Support Manager  
SAGE CITY & COUNTY HEALTHCARE



## THE SOCIAL CARE SUPERWOMAN AWARD (LEARNING DISABILITIES, AUTISM & MENTAL HEALTH)

**Amanda Morgan**  
Registered Home Manager  
Accomplish Group



## THE SOCIAL CARE SUPERWOMAN AWARD (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE)

**Linzi Sim**  
Managing Director/Registered Manager  
Vals Place Ltd



## THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Melanie Weatherley**  
MBE  
Chair  
Lincolnshire Care Association

Nominations are now open for this year's awards: [www.thewags.co.uk/nominate](http://www.thewags.co.uk/nominate)  
[www.thewags.co.uk](http://www.thewags.co.uk) #SocialCareWomen





**Ann Holt**

Divisional Director for Adults  
Saltem Care and Education





## LEADING THE WAY IN SOCIAL CARE

# Ann Holt

Divisional Director for Adults, Salutem Care and Education

**I've worked in various jobs across health and social care and have both enjoyed and endured the different aspects of these roles. I have worked through some fun and tough times along the way, and it would be fair to say that the sector has been a huge part of my life since my late teens! I think this has helped me on my leadership path, because I know what my teams are experiencing, and this helps me to support and guide them.**

Understanding what colleagues actually do is essential for a leader. How can you make the tough decisions if you don't fully understand the complexities of the job?

Those who are familiar with social care will know that the workforce is predominantly female, however, as with most sectors where this is the case, the higher up you get, the more men you get in leadership positions. For me, I'm delighted to be one of many women at a senior leadership level in Salutem, because it's important for colleagues at all levels to see themselves reflected in management positions. They can see that women are making the decisions, being positive role models and leading by example.

I joined the team at Salutem in 2018 and, since then, I've built a reputation for myself as someone who is open, supportive, fair and accessible. In our organisation, our values call on us to see each other as family, and I hope that's how they see me – as someone who's not too important to connect with them.

When developing teams, it is important to recognise people's skills and encourage individuals to shine. A part of my role that I really love is adopting a coaching and mentoring approach, which in turn impacts on the care and support provided to individuals to live their best lives!

*"The sky's the limit, and you never know who you're inspiring on the way."*

*"In our organisation, our values call on us to see each other as family."*

I'm a firm believer that your experiences shape you, and, for me, both personal and professional moments have led me to where I am today. Salutem is one of the most positive leadership experiences I've had in my career and the team I work with, both men and women, are incredibly supportive with advice, feedback and encouragement.

The Salutem family was a massive support to me when, in February 2021, my dad died from COVID. It was so difficult to get up and get on with the job when the pandemic, something so raw in my mind, was something we had to deal with and make decisions about every day. I knew I couldn't turn my back on my work and being able to focus on my role really allowed me to demonstrate my resilience and strength as a leader. My dad was a huge inspiration to me, and he wouldn't want me to hide away. I am happy that I became the person he would have wanted me to be.

It was bleak at times, but it showed me just what I could do, and today I'm in a corporate role with a company I love, winning an award and writing for a sector magazine. My dad would be so proud.

I strive to be an inspiration for my daughter, a fierce and fun-loving seven-year-old, who sees me juggling a leadership role with the most important job I do – being her mum. It's a challenge and sometimes it's a struggle, but I love that she sees me working hard and that others understand that it's not impossible to balance work and home life.

To all the women in social care, whether you're new to the sector or you're at the top of your game, make sure your talent is invested in, your passions are developed and that you get the support to go as far as you want to go. The sky's the limit, and you never know who you're inspiring on the way.





A W A R D S

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**2023**



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- ★ The **Social Care Superwoman** Award ★ The **Inspirational Volunteer** Award ★
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# Finding a dementia friendly way to care home interiors



**Kerry Southern-Reason**  
Managing Director  
Care Home Interiors Co.

**Gentle encouragement in good design is all you need for the perfect care home interior.**

*“Image you are thrust into a completely different living environment and expected to know your way round.”*

Here at the Care Home Interiors Co. this is something we always consider when embarking on a dementia design project. Empathy in understanding how confusing it can be to venture into a different property and not fully understand where you are or where anything is. It's normal, we can all experience this, which is why with a little bit more understanding unfamiliar living environments can be designed to be much more intuitive to what most consider familiar.

When we talk about wayfinding our first thoughts might be of an outdoor pursuit with a compass and a map. In interior design we use the same principle by employing design methods as navigation tools. We hope that the unique piece of artwork, or sensory display acts as a cue to know this is where we turn to eat or my room is down here.

One particular area where special attention must be given is in corridors. We cannot get away from the fact corridors exist, and it isn't always possible to keep corridor runs less than 20 metres. In some very large builds these can be intimidating, even scary, especially if the individual finds themselves alone with no reference points.

As we know memory and perception is one of the biggest declines affecting those living with dementia. Therefore our aim is to maintain the familiar as much as we can by continuing the homely look and feel within corridor areas.

As we know memory and perception is one of the biggest declines affecting those living with dementia. Therefore our aim is to maintain the familiar as much as we can by continuing the homely look and feel within corridor areas.

We start by differentiating styles.

Uniformity may be seen appealing but to someone living with dementia lack of differentiation can be worrying, is it the same corridor or a different corridor?

A recommended solution is always to differentiate. Differentiation provides strong reminders and indicators of where an individual might be. This can be achieved by adding differing visual features such as distinct artwork.

Artwork can make an environment seem familiar, yet support individuals in finding their way around the home. A memorable picture can aid people with their memory loss, and help an individual relate the picture to being close to the lounge, dining room or toilet.

We use additional design methods such as activity stations to provide strong reminders. It can make those connecting spaces, such as corridors, enjoyable places to be and spend time.

Wayfinding signs don't have to be words. Something as simple as a hat rack or a collection of flower posies can act as a cue to enable independent wayfinding.

For us it is about creating recognizable spaces without them being over stimulating, gentle encouragement is all that is needed to start a wayfinding journey to the destination. All corridors will lead somewhere; we make sure design encourages that journey in a safe and positive way.

*“Something as simple as a hat rack can act as a cue to enable independent wayfinding.”*





# Could 'At Home' sensors be the solution to the social care crisis?



**Jayne Rooke**  
Health and Care Sector Lead  
WM5G

**Social Care is currently at crisis point with significant funding gaps, staff shortages and a significant increase in demand. This lack of social care provision is having a severe impact on hospital capacity as medically well people are unable to be discharged. According to NHS data analysed by The Telegraph, six in 10 patients assessed in October were well enough to leave hospital.**

In a bid to address this problem, innovative technology is being used to improve healthcare provision for the growing elderly population. 'Virtual wards' that make use of a combination of connected technologies and face-to-face care have been introduced by NHS England to provide treatment and rehabilitation in the patient's own homes: be they privately owned, social housing, sheltered accommodation, residential homes or care home settings.



The aim is not only to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions among vulnerable patients who are most susceptible to infections, but also to allow quicker discharge; increasing productivity, improving patient experience and reducing costs. Some providers are choosing a combination of technological solutions and adopting a flexible 'step-up, step-down' approach that adapts to support patients' needs.

For example, a virtual ward can be offered to those who are medically stable enough to go home or into social care but who require wrap around care until they are well enough to progress to a self-monitoring solution. In the same way, for those who are self-monitoring but show signs of deteriorating or further illness, progress from self-monitoring to the more intensive virtual ward support, can prevent them going back into hospital. However, relying on self-reporting can lead to problems if there is a lack of patient engagement. It also doesn't provide a real-time assessment of the patient's health, with physical visits from healthcare providers still required to ensure patient safety.

As specialists in connectivity and digital innovation, WM5G has partnered with IoT Solutions Group to trial 'at home' or 'care' sensors that can assist the virtual ward model by monitoring patients within their home 24/7, alerting care providers of any change in patient behaviour.

Placed in the kitchen of vulnerable or elderly person's living areas, at-home sensors use humidity in the room - such as that generated from boiling a kettle, using a toaster or oven - to build an accurate picture of the resident's daily life, creating a behaviour template or 'digital twin'. That data is then used to notify health or care providers in real time if there are changes in behaviour, lack of activity or unusual readings within the home. These 'at home' sensors have been trialled across several council assisted-living residencies in the UK, including Sutton and Wolverhampton, with extremely encouraging results. In fact, Sutton Council believes at least four lives have already been saved by the sensors when alerts triggered visits by carers who found vulnerable residents unable to move following a fall or illness. These included residents who were already using 'wearable alarms' but were unable to activate them, meaning help could be provided immediately rather than the resident having to wait for support until their next scheduled visit.

While at-home sensors are predicted to play a pivotal role in supporting virtual wards, they could also provide additional benefits, such as monitoring temperature within homes to identify those at risk of fuel poverty, as well as playing a role in preventative approaches, managing people's behaviour and promoting healthier lifestyles.

The sensors are just one of a vast array of technologies that promise to revolutionise how we deliver health and social care, bridging the gap between home and hospital settings. Its progression relies on health and care practitioners engaging with innovation and remaining open to new ways of working the promise to improve services for patients while freeing up resources for other front-line activities.

It also needs connectivity to be factored into service and facility design, ensuring patients, carers and clinicians have access to the reliable networks they need to support this more 'arms-length' approach. It doesn't have to be complicated, as demonstrated by the sensor-based pilots referenced above - the sensors used here require no digital skills to set up and convey data using low-powered, wide area networks - but it does need to be thought through and planned in from the earliest stages.

With social care stretched to breaking point and consistently being asked to deliver more for less, we must investigate how technology can support patient's treatment in their own homes, residential homes or care settings to avoid hospital visits and to generally improve patient welfare.

[www.wm5g.org.uk](http://www.wm5g.org.uk)

# The Alzheimer's Dementia & Care Show

The Business Design Centre London 3-4 March 2023



**For help and support, join us at the UK's leading dementia & care event for public and professionals.**

Now in its 10th year, The Alzheimer's Dementia & Care Show has established itself as the must attend dementia care event for families, carers and professionals looking for new ideas, help, information and practical support.

For 2023 as well as a key focus on dementia, the show is expanding to include a wider range of suppliers and content from the whole care sector, to provide carers with information, latest products, services, solutions and excellent networking opportunities. Exhibitors include organisations offering a range of products and services including care at home, care homes, living aids, reminiscence therapy, funding, training, telecare, assistive technology, charity, research, legal, education and finance.

A high-profile keynote conference programme including speakers from the Alzheimer's Society, Dementia UK, Age UK and Re:Cognition Health - responsible for the ground-breaking clinical trials for lecanemab - will run alongside the popular Admiral Nurses and Alzheimer's Society 1-2-1 Clinics.

Nigel Ward, the show's founder and organiser said: "Over the last decade our annual event has strived to deliver practical help and expert guidance to care professionals as well as unpaid members of the public caring for those with dementia. In the continuing absence of more robust financial support, both persons living with dementia and their carers desperately need and deserve all the help and reassurance they can get.

*"Under one roof, with straightforward access to products and information from trusted suppliers and CPD accredited experts, visitors can increase their knowledge and confidence which in turn benefits the quality of care they provide."*

Held at The Business Design Centre London on Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th March, the doors open at 9.30am each day and close at 5.00pm on Friday and 4.00pm on Saturday. One-day tickets are from £18.00 online, £23.00 on the door.

For further information and tickets visit:  
[alzheimersshow.co.uk](https://alzheimersshow.co.uk)





# The value of apprenticeships in tackling workforce shortages



**Steve Sawyer**

Managing Director  
Access Health, Support and Care

**Care providers across the country have become accustomed to workforce shortages. As a recent report on health and social care workforce from the Health and Social Care Committee showed, 95% of care providers are struggling to recruit staff and 75% of providers are finding it hard to retain their existing workforce. This is compounded by the fact that these roles are typically paid less than 80% of the wider economy.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has further affected the sector's ability to recruit and retain staff – during this time, the working conditions of social care workers suffered, as they battled with long hours, restrictive working conditions, and an increased risk to their health.

And on the ground, these staff shortages can lead to increased frontline pressures, burnout and job dissatisfaction. They can also impact the quality of individual care – in October 2022, the CQC's State of Care report said that in the first three months of 2022, 2.2 million hours of homecare could not be delivered because of insufficient workforce capacity.

So, how can we encourage more people to pursue what can be an extremely rewarding career in care and stay in the sector?

***“One of the ways that we are promoting career pathways in social care is through the Government's Apprenticeship Levy Scheme.”***





## Apprenticeships

If we are going to reverse the trend and increase the percentage of people joining and staying in social care, we need to incentivise careers in the sector and create a positive environment for people to work in. Doing so will improve job satisfaction – a huge factor in the departure of many health and social care workers, as reported by the Nuffield Trust.

At the Access Group, one of the ways that we are promoting career pathways in social care is through the government's Apprenticeship Levy Scheme, which aims to encourage work-based training in particular sectors. Working with 75,000 customers across commercial and non-profit sectors, we invest the money into our own apprenticeship schemes as well as sharing it with organisations from across health and care, supporting them to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The Health, Support and Care division (HSC) of the company has invested £100,000 since March 2022, alleviating workforce pressures by enabling 86 health and social care apprenticeships across the country.



Benefactors of the financial support include residential care providers, Burrow Down Support and Home2Home with Care; and domiciliary care provider Hamble Valley Care, alongside a range of other care providers using the additional resource to enhance skills of new and existing staff, thus providing them with more opportunities to advance their careers.

***“We invest money into our own apprenticeship schemes as well as sharing it with organisations from across health and care.”***

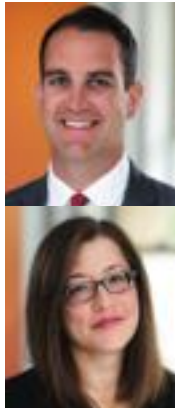
As we see it, apprenticeships play a crucial role in improving job satisfaction and, ultimately, staff retention, with unhappy and unfulfilled staff more likely to move into other roles. They also motivate the next generation of talent to pursue a career in care, encouraged by the support and opportunity to upskill in the sector.

Admittedly, apprenticeship schemes aren't a silver bullet to the ever-growing workforce crisis, but they are a positive step in the right direction to support a sector that we all value and depend on.

Find out more about how the Access Group supports various initiatives here:  
[theaccessgroup.com/hsc](https://theaccessgroup.com/hsc)



# 2023 - a year of opportunity and challenge for social care providers



**James Sage**

Partner Health and Social Care Team  
RWK Goodman

**Mei-Ling Huang**

Partner Health and Social Care Team  
RWK Goodman

**The challenges and opportunities facing the social care sector in 2022 will continue and build in 2023. Here, RWK Goodman's James Sage and Mei-Ling Huang point to the four things social care providers will have to address in 2023.**

## **CQC in the spotlight**

During the pandemic, CQC introduced remote monthly reviews of services before deciding whether to request further information or inspect. This practice will continue and there is no indication that CQC will not continue its practice of 'responding to risk'. Unfortunately, this means that if it decides to inspect, there is a high likelihood that it will find problems.

CQC is also focusing on winter pressures, saying it wants to create more capacity for hospitals to discharge to adult social care by increasing the number of providers with a 'good' or 'outstanding' rating. It has stated that it can do this by inspecting providers with ratings of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' where their evidence shows there has been improvement.

*"Appetite from private equity for the sector appears to be recovering following the political upheaval last autumn."*

This may sound like positive news to many providers with negative ratings. However, the Government is indicating that local authorities and commissioners will be tasked with choosing the services that are re-inspected, so it may not be possible for providers to request an inspection.

CQC has indicated that it will be launching its new online provider portal in the summer of 2023 enabling it to gather evidence in a 'new and structured way'. It is aiming to use the portal to carry out assessments towards the end of 2023. However, IT projects can be tricky at the best of times so it remains to be seen whether this will be implemented in the summer and how effective it will actually be.

## **Workforce challenges**

Recruitment is more challenging than ever, with an estimated 165,000 vacant roles in the care sector and no Government strategy to fill the gaps.

Many providers are currently unable to expand or meet existing demand for their services due to a lack of staff, and this is likely to continue. A recession and redundancies in other sectors could provide some short-term respite, but it will not be a long-term solution. Any benefit may also be offset by increasing numbers of care staff leaving the sector due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Some providers awarded significant pay increases last year to help attract staff and we see this trend continuing this year, particularly in the high-end private market and the not-for-profit/charity market. However, those providers unable to fund staff pay increases due to reliance on public funding rates that fail to keep up with increasing costs and wage pressures will be at a disadvantage in the recruitment market.

Providers with robust and effective recruitment processes in place to create a positive candidate experience and avoid losing candidates during the process will have a competitive advantage. The first 90 days of employment is the highest risk area for staff attrition and perfecting the onboarding process will be key to retaining staff, with a greater and sustained focus on engagement, training, communication, and peer support during that time.

Those with a greater focus on culture, wellbeing, flexible working and learning and development will also be better placed to retain staff in 2023.



### **March of AI**

There will be a continued push towards digitisation on all aspects of care and record keeping, along with an increase in providers offering AI tools to enhance and supplement care and diagnostic processes, and matching carers to residents. Expect virtual and augmented reality offerings to increase, giving care providers new and exciting opportunities to provide therapy and entertain residents.

However, progress will come with an increased focus on data protection. Data security will continue to be important and the ICO will look more carefully at what personal data care providers are collecting and why, the lawful basis used to justify processing, and transparency of communication to data subjects.

### **Availability of funding**

Banks continue to see the Social Care sector in a positive light and are keen to make funds available to established providers wanting to expand or build new homes. However, margins along with the base rate have increased impacting loan-to-value and interest cover ratios. Expect terms to be set with more headroom.

*“Expect virtual and augmented reality offerings to increase.”*

Appetite from private equity for the sector appears to be recovering following the political upheaval in the autumn of last year. Sellers need to be realistic about the price and terms they can achieve given the increase in the cost of debt, energy costs and workforce issues. Price needs to be carefully balanced against the credibility of the offer received, with close attention being paid at the offer stage to the financial backing of the buyer and speed with which they can execute the transaction.

[www.rwkgoodman.com](http://www.rwkgoodman.com)

*“Banks continue to see the Social Care sector in a positive light.”*







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

**Ruth French**  
Operations Director

**Alex Ball**  
Operations Manager  
Stow Healthcare Group



**Each month I meet key stakeholders and business leaders in the social care sector. This month I met Ruth French, Operations Director, and Alex Ball, Operations Manager, at Stow Healthcare Group Ltd. I caught up with Ruth and Alex to discuss workforce development, staff wellbeing and championing best practice.**

### **So Ruth and Alex, can you tell us a little about Stow Healthcare?**

Stow Healthcare is the East Anglian based, family run group that is making the industry stand up and take notice. In only 12 years, Stow Healthcare has moved from an inexperienced start up, to a multi-award-winning group. With eight homes in its portfolio, Stow Healthcare has become known as the industry 'disrupter' that can turn around the most difficult homes to create beacons of quality care within the community.

### **Workforce development is clearly a key part of Stow Healthcare's vision – what schemes and programmes are you working on to ensure this?**

We believe that this sector has so many unique career opportunities with so many rewards and we love to inspire others to consider a career in social care!

At Stow Healthcare we believe that developing staff through professional qualifications and stimulating training is key. From practical quizzes and dignity 'Hazard Rooms' to bitesize sessions in safeguarding for families and residents, our approach to training is innovative, impactful and memorable. We do not let the grass grow.

### **Staff recruitment & retention are necessarily implicated in workforce development discussions, so how are Stow working to improve recruitment and retention specifically?**

For us it is about dispelling the myths surrounding care homes and showing how rewarding working in social care can be.

We both had unconventional routes into the sector, which we think is helpful in demonstrating that social care is a place where people of all talents can find a role. For example, Ruth came to social care after a career in the civil service, supporting in central government. She has utilised her experiences of leadership to support the business to grow and manage change successfully.

Starting as kitchen assistant ten years ago and rising to Operations Manager, Alex takes time, using her own experience to put a twist on the perception of social care as a career and ways to progress in the sector. She has shared her career progression at student events at schools and universities, and more recently helped develop the 'Step into Social Care' work programme for young people looking for opportunities in the sector.

In 2022, we created the concept of 'Career Cafes' and arranged multiple face to face sessions at every home, with additional sessions via Zoom for staff to openly discuss their career aspirations and training opportunities. The results have been fantastic. Over 20 staff are now starting the process to complete a diploma in health and social care with us ranging from Level 2-5.

The last 12 months have marked another change for Stow Healthcare, as we have started to sponsor overseas nurses for the first time. So far seven nurses have arrived and are being embedded into our homes, supported every step of the way.

*"We both had unconventional routes into the sector, which we think is helpful in demonstrating that social care is a place where people of all talents can find a role."*

### **Being involved with the Outstanding Society, best practice is another aspect of Stow's vision – what does outstanding practice look like to you?**

We love innovating and sharing best practice. Being part of networks where we can do this helps us to learn from others too. Outstanding practice for us is about every resident feeling they have a purpose and are supported to enjoy each day in our homes.

**Kirsty Hollins**  
Communications Executive, Care Talk

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

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#) @stowhealthcare

# Calling all suppliers of excellence to social care!

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

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

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

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

Nominate online at: [www.caretalk.co.uk/scl](http://www.caretalk.co.uk/scl)  
Closing date for nominations 31st July 2023



# CareTalk 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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