

BelongLife

SPRING 2022



Belong and
Bluecoat

Where the Arts
Belong

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Word from the team

Stacey McCann, Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer contemplates the new beginnings heralded by spring.

The arrival of spring, and with it the promise of a return to relative normality, has been reflected at Belong villages with pioneering arts initiatives that have been singled out for recognition at a national level.

Notably, *Where the Arts Belong*, the unique collaboration between Belong and Liverpool contemporary arts centre, Bluecoat, took home the Creative Arts Award at the 3rd Sector Care Awards 2022. The initiative sees critically acclaimed artists, working with Belong customers, both in villages and via video link, and has demonstrated a range of benefits for people living with dementia.

In a new arts partnership, Belong is working with UK music therapy charity Nordoff Robbins, to introduce resident music therapists to its villages.

Belong Warrington will be the first to pilot this post and therapist, Pam Thomson, will be designing meaningful one-to-one and group sessions for village residents and tenants. Meanwhile, Belong Morris Feinmann is supporting a Nordoff Robbins student placement, which is seeing a cellist from the Royal Northern College of Music, work with residents on a weekly basis.

There's a lot to be excited about in the coming months too. Following the retirement of Tracey Stakes, Belong's new Chief Executive, Martin Rix, will start in his role in April. Martin joins us from Norfolk-based Norse Care, where he was responsible for services in 36 care homes and housing with care schemes. He also brings experience of leading specialist dementia and nursing settings, as well as property development, and we look forward to giving him a warm Belong welcome.

In wider village developments, Belong Chester is set to open this summer. A fully integrated nursery will make it the first of its kind intergenerational care setting in the North West. Recently, it was announced that it will take part in a research project exploring the value of intergenerational experiences for both younger and older people. Construction of Belong Birkdale village restarted, and preliminary work is underway at our Wirral Waters location. I hope you enjoy this issue of Belong Life along with all the joys of spring.

Stacey McCann

Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer

Work resumes at Belong Birkdale



Work at Belong Birkdale has resumed this month following the appointment of Whitfield & Brown to complete the project.

Preparatory work has now commenced at the site close to Southport town centre, ahead of the building works restarting in May. The Widnes-based contractor has been selected for their experience and expertise in specialist dementia accommodation.

Scheduled to open in summer 2023, Belong Birkdale will become home to over 100 people, providing 74 suites divided across six households with 24-hour care and nursing support, as well as 30 one and two-bedroom independent living apartments, which will be available to buy or rent.

The village will create a vibrant hub in the community, with amenities including a bistro, hair salon, exercise studio, entertainment venue with licensed bar, and a specialist day care service. Belong's award-winning home care service, Belong at Home, will also operate from the site.

The development has been made possible through Belong's partnership with Octopus Real Estate, part of Octopus Group, and has been designed by leading architects, Pozzoni Architecture.

“We know that the Birkdale village is highly anticipated in the community, so we're excited to get on-site and progress work rapidly to finish what will be a magnificent care environment.”

Chris Hughes, Belong Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, said: “We're delighted to be working with Whitfield & Brown for the completion of Belong Birkdale. Their track record will be invaluable in bringing to life the vision for our first coastal care village.”

Gareth Hadfield, Deputy Managing Director at Whitfield & Brown, said: “As the principal contractor, we're looking forward to working with Belong. We know that the Birkdale village is highly anticipated in the community, so we're excited to get on-site and progress work rapidly to finish what will be a magnificent care environment.”

Jon Murphy, Operations Manager at Whitfield & Brown, added: “As a resident of Southport myself, I'm proud to be heading-up such a prestigious project which will be of great benefit for local people for years to come.”

Belong Birkdale will be Belong's ninth location, following the opening of Belong Chester, this summer.



A Customer's View

Nothing is more important to Belong than our customers, which is why we love hearing about their experiences.

For this issue of Belong Life, we spoke to **Sylvia Chandler (85)**, an Experience Day customer at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, to whom the service has given a new lease of life.



Pictured: Sylvia enjoys a game of scrabble in the Old Pomona Inn

Like many people living on their own, Potteries-native Sylvia takes pleasure in the independence it affords her, though sometimes it can prove a challenge to meet people and build new friendships with others in the community.

She first came to the village in autumn last year, after her daughter, Karen, thought it would be a good way to keep her mum busy during the week. Speaking of her first experience day, Sylvia recalls: "I was excited and, admittedly, a little nervous too – a bit like your first day at school! Emma Palin, the Experience Coordinator was lovely; she was very helpful when I arrived and looked after me throughout the day and introduced me to people. I remember joining others to play Scrabble, chess and complete crosswords, which was perfect for me because I'm a big fan of games."

Catching up with friends

After a successful first visit, Sylvia is now a regular face at the village, attending twice-weekly to take advantage of everything that's available, including the unique Belong Heritage Gallery, where she particularly enjoys Samuel Bell's Tea Room and catching up with her friends in The Old Pomona Inn. Over the Christmas period, she joined in arts and crafts sessions, making festive decorations for her home. More recently, Sylvia has started taking part in the chair-based workouts in the exercise studio, led by Georgina Cliff, one of Belong's Exercise Specialists.

"The Experience Days mean everything to me," Sylvia continues. "I didn't go out much in the week, so my time would mostly be spent watching television, and whilst I spent time with family, including my two great grandsons, it would often be at weekends. Now, I have the visits to the village to look forward to; it's a wonderful service and I don't think everyone knows about it yet – everyone should be made aware of it and come and see for themselves."

New experiences

Finally, we asked Sylvia what she plans to do next at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme and it appears Emma Palin is encouraging her to try something new. Sylvia said: "I usually have lunch in the Bistro and Emma has invited me to their breakfast club, which will be a first for me – it will mean getting up a bit earlier than I'm used to, but if the breakfast is as good as the lunch time food, I'll be there bright and early."

If you would like to contribute to the next 'A Customer's View' column, please pass on your details to a member of staff or email the editor at: tracy.brookes@belong.org.uk

Village News



The Nursery in Belong joins intergenerational research project

The Nursery in Belong Chester will join a new UK research project exploring the benefits of bringing young children and older people together to enjoy shared learning experiences when it opens in Chester city centre this summer.

Run by the nursery's operator, national charity Ready Generations, The Born4Life project connects inspirational settings from across the UK with the support of researchers. Together they will explore how relationships between people of different ages promote health and wellbeing for everyone involved. It will focus on building meaningful relationships through creative activities and everyday experiences, such as gardening, storytelling, nature walks and cooking.

Along with participating nurseries in Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Stirling and the Outer Hebrides, The Nursery in Belong Chester will serve as a setting for research by academics from the University of Stirling, the University of Northumbria and Liverpool John Moores University. This will involve researching how connection through a variety of sustained experiences improves self-confidence, motivation and overall happiness for all participants whilst reducing any feelings of isolation and loneliness for older people.

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“Intergenerational interactions have already been shown to have extensive benefits for the health, wellbeing and cognition of both young and old.”

Ready 
Generations

Ready Generations advocates and investigates the benefits of connection between generations through education, the promotion of lifelong learning and experiences that place healthy relationships at the centre of everything.

As designer of the project, Ready Generations founder Sue Egersdorff said: "We're really excited about this unique opportunity to learn together across a number of pioneering settings and to share best practice as the project develops. Intergenerational interactions have already been shown to have extensive benefits for the health, wellbeing and cognition of both young and old. The project is so important at this moment in time when relationships and connection have been incredibly difficult for many families."

Belong's Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer, Stacey McCann, added: "This represents a reaffirmation of Belong's commitment to intergenerational practice. We're looking forward to partnering with other providers as part of this innovative study and acting on the findings to enhance future best practice."



Memory Lane...

For this issue of Memory Lane, we hear the life story of Frances Waldek, Palm House resident at Belong Morris Feinmann. Frances recently celebrated her 100th birthday and her son, Stephen, shares his mum's story and her secret to living a long, happy life.

My mother, Frances Lustig, was born in Vienna, Austria, to a close-knit, middle class Jewish family. They lived in the Porzellangasse in the 7th District of the city, and from time to time, visited the nearby Seitenstettengasse Temple (also known as Stadttempel). She excelled at school, especially in languages and the arts and was looking forward to higher education. Sadly, Hitler and the Anschluss – the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany – put an end to this and, along with her parents and sister, she emigrated to Britain in 1938.

Life in Britain

The family moved to Porth, a small town in the South Wales Valleys, joining the substantial number of Jewish refugees and evacuees relocating to Wales (a designated safe zone). Frances then joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) – the women's branch of the British Army during WWII, which would later be merged into the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) – and was stationed in Chester, working as a cook.

After the war, Frances met my father in London at a club for Jewish refugees – he was part of the Jewish Brigade and had previously been enlisted in Palestine, before being demobilised in Britain and given permission to marry. They tied the knot on 1st March 1946 at West London Synagogue and settled in Cardiff.



When I was born a year later, Frances took a step back from work, though she worked tirelessly as a member of the Reform Jewish Community, as well as other charities, including the Red Cross. We later welcomed my sister, Eve, and mother would agree that life was good and very fulfilling. She was close to my aunt and both their families became well established in the local community.

Moving to Belong

After my father died, Frances remained in the Welsh capital, right up until age 95, when she finally agreed to move, choosing Belong Morris Feinmann. And even then, she was living in one of the village's independent living apartments; it's only recently that she has moved into the Palm household.

She takes much pleasure keeping track of the lives of her six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren (with another one on the way). They are based all over the world: Singapore, Australia, South Africa, London and Manchester and thanks to modern technology, keep in touch via video call.

Despite not being keen on being made a fuss of, Mother had an amazing time at her birthday party (thank you to all the Belong team for their amazing help and care). My wife, Joan, is a professional pianist and, along with violinist, Maurice, and cellist, Jeff, enjoyed performing for all for the afternoon.

When asked about the secret to a long life, my mother said, "Perhaps it's the fact that I've always been positive and kept mentally and physically active – it's probably not the smoking and all the G&Ts!"



Pictured: 1 - Frances celebrating her 100th birthday, at Belong Morris Feinmann; 2 - Frances (red dress), pictured in 1976 at her son and soon-to-be daughter-in-law's engagement party (couple pictured left). Her late husband is also pictured (right).

Village News

Revolutionary walking frame one step closer to reality

Common complaints associated with walking frames for older people could soon be a thing of the past, thanks to the residents at Belong, who are helping a team of academics and their partner, NRS Healthcare, with the development of a pioneering prototype set to revolutionise the traditional two-wheel walker.

Researchers from the University of Salford and NRS Healthcare designers joined forces with Belong's care villages to better understand the biomechanics of adults using walking frames. The aim is to eliminate the need for users to pick up the walking aid – sometimes called 'Zimmer frames with front wheels' – in order to cross raised door and carpet thresholds, as well as when changing direction.

Zoe Robson, Lead Exercise Specialist at Belong, explains: "Traditional walking frames available haven't evolved to meet the needs of older people. Picking the frame up to turn is not an option for everyone and those who can are at an increased risk of accidents, so we're very pleased to be able to facilitate the development of a new version for safer turning, which is backed by science."

Belong's residents have participated in the creation of prototypes, testing out and providing feedback at each stage of development. The result is an innovative walking frame, with a change in wheel dimensions combined with a novel mechanism to enable a smooth walking experience which avoids the need to pick the frame up. It is also specially designed to prevent the aid unintentionally running sideways.



Pictured: (Top) Belong's Lead Exercise Specialist, Zoe Robson; Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme residents (top r) Roy Broadfield (95) and (bottom r) Ken Edwards (75); Belong Crewe resident (bottom l) Sheila Neville (91); pictured with Dr Sibylle Thies.



The project is a Knowledge Transfer Partnership which is funded by NRS Healthcare and Innovate UK. The final product will have the potential to help the estimated 22% of UK older adults who use two-wheeled walkers indoors.

Leading the project, Dr. Sibylle Thies, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Salford School of Health & Society, said: "It has been a pleasure working with Belong's residents to achieve our research goals. Using their insights and studying the biomechanics of how they physically handle the prototype has been instrumental to the design process."

Zoe Robson added: "Our residents have loved being involved in the project; we have established relationships with a number of universities to explore how the lives of older people can be enhanced and we place great emphasis on improving health and fitness – for all ages and even for those with limited mobility. The pilot walker appears to be a new era for walking aids and will also help older people maintain their independence."

“...we're very pleased to be able to facilitate the development of a new version for safer turning, which is backed by science.”

Dementia-Arts Collaboration Achieves Awards Success



Pictured: (L-R) Alan Dunn, artist; Stacey McCann, Belong Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer; Daniel Turner, Heritage Coordinator, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme; York Woodford-Smith, Founder & Managing Director, Five on a Bike; Angela Rippon CBE, award ceremony host.

Where the Arts Belong, a unique arts collaboration between Belong and Liverpool contemporary arts centre, Bluecoat, has won the Creative Arts Award at the 3rd Sector Care Awards 2022.

At the dazzling ceremony, attended by leading industry figures and not-for-profit care providers, host Angela Rippon CBE presented the award which recognises excellence in using art to engage with vulnerable people – in this case, Belong's apartment tenants.

The win was determined by a panel comprising top professionals connected to care, including CEOs, academics and consultants, following interviews with nominees to explore the background and outcomes of their artistic endeavours.

Since 2019, Belong's customers have worked closely with critically-acclaimed artists commissioned by Bluecoat, to promote wellbeing through creative pursuits and evaluate the use of arts in care environments.

The *Where the Arts Belong* project commenced with 'artist residencies' which initially saw artists working in Belong villages, leading an array of art forms, ranging from storytelling and sculpture to sound art and dance. The project formed part of the Celebrating Age programme, funded by Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation, with additional support from The Rayne Foundation. Academics observed the wellbeing benefits from the initiative, which included high engagement, enhanced cognitive capacity and an increased sense of community amongst participants.

It was during the pandemic when participation was widened to help alleviate any loneliness experienced by Belong's apartment tenants. Funded by the government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the project saw artists Gav Cross, Alan Dunn and Brigitte Jurack bringing the benefits achieved using the arts, into Belong villages across the North West, via video call.

Commenting on the win, Stacey McCann, Belong Interim Co-Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer, said: "We're thrilled to win the Creative Arts Award and it really is a win for all our customers and Bluecoat's commissioned artists. At Belong, we strive to innovate throughout our approach to dementia care, and the arts have proven to be highly successful in engaging with our customers.

"We're also excited for the *Where the Arts Belong* exhibition which opens at the Bluecoat, in Liverpool, this month and we invite everyone to come and see the work for themselves."

Belong residents get creative.



Music therapy sounds like a big hit

Music therapy workshops designed to engage, entertain and enrich lives have struck the right chord with residents at Belong Morris Feimann, who have been creating their own concerts as part of a flourishing relationship with the UK's largest music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins.

Classical cellist and student therapist, Awen Blandford, is currently working with Belong's Didsbury customers – many of whom are living with dementia – to translate their personal experiences, memories and observations of the world through the power of music.

By working with them one-to-one and in small groups, the Royal Northern College of Music postgraduate encourages residents to contribute however they please, then closely listens to their movement, breathing and vocal sounds to help build and produce performances with them.

Angela Lockett, cultural and religious coordinator at Belong Morris Feimann, provides more detail: "It's very much about our residents and apartment tenants leading the sessions and Awen has been fantastic supporting them. Recently, we performed a cross between Frank Sinatra and a Christmas carol – it was certainly a curious mix and the key is that it was shaped by customers, and that's what's important."

Pictured: Belong Morris Feimann Residents, Geoffrey Ward and Maureen Mairs.



Belong enlisted Nordoff Robbins as part of their ethos of promoting the wellbeing of customers through meaningful occupation in line with their interests. Belong found the charity to also share their approach to using music and the arts to unlock memories, reduce isolation and help people regain their sense of identity, no matter what their stage of dementia.

Speaking of her experience, Awen Blandford said: "I'm thrilled to be working with Belong Morris Feimann. Some of the residents have past experience playing instruments, whilst others have found themselves enjoying a new pastime. Music can break through where words sometimes can't and to see residents of all abilities engage has been wonderful."

Angela Lockett added: "The impact on our customers has been remarkable. The music has provided stimulating activity and the opportunity to socialise, reminisce and share happy emotions. It has a gentle lure that brings you in – you just can't help it. Watching the sessions is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen."

The collaboration follows a number of musical delights Belong has promoted for its customers. Past endeavours include opera workshops, visits from local choirs, and performances from the renowned Northern Chamber Orchestra and Manchester's Chetham's School of Music.

Carer overcomes barriers to build career of her dreams

As the care sector staffing crisis continues, one Macclesfield carer is encouraging others to think twice about their options, whatever their reservations may be.

For Mel Oakes, a Support Worker who helps older people and those living with dementia, it was the uncertainty of what to do with her life that once presented a challenge when it came to forging her career.

But, following a chance invitation to assist a carer at Belong Macclesfield, she found the inspiration to build the career of her dreams.

Having left college with a hairdressing qualification, a young Mel found herself bouncing between a variety of jobs; namely, retail, cleaning and working in a chip shop, before landing a role in her late twenties in the on-site bistro at Belong Macclesfield.

Mel provides more detail: "I started off in the kitchens, helping to prepare the food for the residents, their families, and the visiting guests from the community. I enjoyed the work and providing for our customers, though I didn't think working on the care side could ever be for me.

"However, after being asked to help a care colleague one shift, I absolutely loved it and little did I know it would be the first day of a fulfilling career in care. I felt I had even more of a purpose going to work and I was determined to make becoming a carer happen."

Since that pivotal day, Mel jumped at all the opportunities to help the care team, before finally taking the plunge and successfully applying to become a Support Worker.

Caroline Ray, General Manager at Belong Macclesfield, said: "Though she didn't hold any previous qualifications, Mel's work ethic made her the perfect candidate for 'The Care Certificate' which forms part of a carer's robust induction programme. It's on-the-job training which certifies new starters in the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected for the high standards of the role, whilst also building their confidence."

Despite initially not thinking care was for her, Mel has since progressed through the ranks to a Lead Senior Support worker position, overseeing a care team in one of the care village's 'household' cohorts of residents. She is currently working toward her NVQ Level 3 Health and Social Care, which she hopes to complete in the next few months.

Mel adds: "I never thought I'd do another qualification after my youth but Belong provides lots of help and guidance for its colleagues to achieve, and being able to help older people enjoy a high quality of life and independence makes it all worth it; the future's very bright for me."

"I never thought I'd do another qualification after my youth but Belong provides lots of help and guidance for its colleagues to achieve, and being able to help older people enjoy a high quality of life and independence makes it all worth it; the future's very bright for me."



BELONG AT HOME

Crewe mum finds her ideal job on local doorsteps

Parents will be all too aware of the challenges of juggling a busy home and working life. For Crewe mum, Leah Wilson, 29, what felt like an extreme decision to change careers to meet the needs of her growing family, has turned out to be the ideal job.

Leah is one of a number of Belong at Home Community Support Workers, who visit older people living in and around Crewe and Nantwich. Her role is to help them to live their lives in their own homes, as independently as possible, including assistance with personal care, domestic tasks, as well as fitness and emotional support.

Whilst caring for others has always been her passion, two years ago, Leah's career path took a new direction to enable her to look after and enjoy precious time with her own family.

After a decade spent building a career in childcare, climbing the ranks to senior roles in local nurseries, it was when her own children reached school age that Leah faced some resistance from her employer. She explains: "I'd asked to start half an hour later in the morning as I couldn't secure childcare before school hours. The response, in so many words, was to choose between my kids or my career."

Having confided in her younger sibling, a Support Worker at Belong Crewe, Leah was encouraged to consider other options which could afford her the flexibility she needed. "My sister said, 'Leah, care is all you know and you can drive, so why not give Belong at Home a go?'" she continues. "At first, it felt a bit odd, as I didn't have qualifications in adult care, but that didn't matter – with support, I was able to train on-the-job to become fully qualified."

The mum-of-two initially completed The Care Certificate, designed for those who are new to care, as part of a comprehensive induction programme. Since then, has since been promoted to a senior position with Belong at Home, the domiciliary care service from Belong Crewe – both of which are rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).



Pictured: Leah Wilson, Support Worker at Belong at Home, with customer, Audrey

"It's the ideal set-up," Leah says. "I work the opposite hours to my partner, Stephen, a production engineer; so, when I'm working, he's at home looking after the family. A lot of Belong at Home managers have their own families, so they really understand the need for adaptability and work with you to meet your needs."

Looking back at her big decision, Leah is pleased she made the move: "I love all of it! Our visits make our customers' day; they are living their last years and some customers don't have family close by and some don't have any, so you go to work every day knowing you're making a positive difference to people's lives.

"I'm glad I made the change. Now, I can take the kids to school, which I couldn't do before, and I also have a job which I love. I'd say to anyone thinking about it, just go for it – I have a background in care, but as long as you have a passion for looking after others, like me, you can train for the qualifications from day one."

If you would like to join our inspirational home care teams, and work for an award-winning employer, view our current vacancies and apply online at: www.belong.org.uk/jobs

"A lot of Belong at Home managers have their own families, so they really understand the need for adaptability and work with you to meet your needs."



Living the Values

We speak to colleagues who embody Belong's values in their day-to-day work.

In this issue, we chat with Jacqui Cooper, a Registered General Nurse at Belong Warrington, who used to enjoy visiting the village's bistro while studying at the nearby college.

Can you tell us about your career to date?

I always wanted to work in care. When I was at school, I got a job working at a nursing home at weekends before going on to study Health and Social Care at A-level at Priestley College, which is across the road from Belong Warrington. During this time, I used to go for breakfast with my friends at the bistro at the village, and I was fortunate to undertake a placement working on one of the households.

After completing my nursing degree at the University of Chester, I worked at Warrington hospital to gain experience in an acute setting, but I always wanted to return to care. I became a Registered General Nurse at Belong Warrington nine months ago.

What are your work responsibilities?

I oversee nursing care, which includes supervising the administration of controlled drugs, attending to any medical issues that require dressings, and end-of-life care. An important part of my role is liaising with families to ensure that people's choices are respected in all matters relating to this type of care.



What's your favourite thing about working at Belong?

I fell in love with the set-up, how homely it is, and how welcoming people are when I used to visit the bistro. Nowadays, I enjoy that I get to spend more time with customers and get to know them and their families much better than if I worked in hospital.

What has been the highlight of your experience at work?

Since the villages have been able to welcome visitors again, it's been heartwarming to see Belong return to how it should be. It's how I remember it. I generally find it very satisfying to support people to live with dignity at all times, as well as being there for family during difficult periods.

Finally, what do you do to unwind after work?

I have two children, so I don't have a great deal of spare time. I enjoy long walks with the dog and quality family time. We have a National Trust membership, so we also like to go to places of interest like Dunham Massey.

In the Spotlight: Callum Murphy

In this issue of *Belong Life*, we chat with Callum Murphy, Support Worker at Belong Warrington, who is flying the flag for men working in social care.

Last October, Skills for Care – the strategy and planning body for adult social care in England – estimated just 18% of the adult social care workforce is male. Since joining the care profession eight years ago, Callum is passionate about promoting his vocation and encouraging other men to consider joining him in a career looking after others.

"I believe our male customers, especially those living on the households, respond well to male colleagues," Callum says. "That's not to say they don't get on with females working here, but it's natural that men often find they can relate to other men, in the same way women build close relationships with other women."

"And for things like personal care, such as shaving, when you shave your own face daily, it comes naturally when you do it for someone else."

Having spent the first five years of his care career looking after children and young adults with challenging behaviours, Callum made the move to adult social care. He had already had first-hand experience looking after those with dementia, as his nan lives with the condition. Approaching the big 3-0 and ready for a new challenge in his career, he applied for a role at Belong Warrington.

Callum continues: "I started in February two years ago, just before the first lockdown. It was a tough time for all of us but everyone was friendly and warm. I already had the qualifications, just not the experience working with adults, and I was able to combine my skills with Belong's thorough dementia training. There's a real sense of team here – when I started, I didn't know how to use a hoist, for example, and people took the time to work with me and show me the ropes."



Pictured: Callum with Belong Warrington customer, Philip

The village's Lead Senior Support Worker, Carol Norman, describes him as a 'shining star'. "He always goes above and beyond for our customers," she explains.

Callum also told us: "Just last week, a timid gentleman moved in and he was a bit overwhelmed, as you'd expect. I've spent a lot of time with him and gave him a tour of the village and he's now starting to come out of his shell and has become a lot more talkative. That's what makes the job so rewarding, getting to know our customers and making a difference to their lives."



Volunteer profile

In this feature, we recognise the outstanding contributions of volunteers to the Belong community. This issue, we give our thanks to Alison Isherwood, who has retired from her role on Belong Atherton's Experience Day team but just can't stay away from the village.

"One of my favourite quotes," Alison begins, "is from the late American poet, Maya Angelou: 'People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.' And, I also believe that whatever stage of life, whatever challenges we're up against, people should know that they matter."

Alison has been applying her outlook to her work at the village over five years, working with residents one-to-one and in small groups, leading creative activities, including music, poetry and discussion of favourite books, crafts, and sensory sessions. She sought voluntary work following the sad passing of her mother and having cared for her in the final months of her life, Alison felt compelled to work in adult social care.

"After reading Belong's values and the emphasis on dignity and emotional, as well as practical care, I realised they matched my own," Alison continues. "Since joining, I've experienced a rollercoaster of emotions, with moments of joy and many challenges."

When a part-time position on the Experience Day team became available, Alison jumped at the chance. Her dedication was later recognised by Wigan Council when, in 2019, they awarded her the Outstanding Care Home Staff Award.

Having retired this time last year, Alison has since returned to volunteering and reflects on the rewarding aspects of her work, citing the friendships formed and being able to make a customer's day.

Alison recalls: "A resident took comfort in watching me arrange flowers and took it upon herself to tidy up after me. When I told her son about it, he said, 'That is Mum, through and through!' – something so small can have such a positive impact on a person's wellbeing, even if just for a moment."

'Privileged' is the word Alison tells us best describes her experiences at Belong. She finishes by telling us: "To meet and become close to remarkable people and their families and to work alongside some amazing colleagues whose good humour, compassion and resilience has been an inspiration. I am very grateful to them and feel privileged to be a part of the team."

Pictured: Alison with Belong Atherton customer, Shelagh

Notice Board

For further details on these stories and more, from across our villages, follow us on Facebook or Twitter, or visit our news page on our website at www.belong.org.uk/news

Teamwork makes the dream work

The **Belong At Home Warrington** team participated in a team-building event recently.

Some of the Community Support Workers (pictured) attended a walk around Moel Famau in Wales, organised by Community Senior Support Worker Emma Gorton.

Pictured (L-R): Emma Gorton, Mary Sharrock, Sam Smith, Kelly Grant.

Messages of love

Belong Atherton received a selection of Valentines cards from Rowan Tree Primary School for Valentine's Day. Customers loved seeing all of the cards the children have created and reading the lovely messages. Thank you to everyone involved, this was a lovely gesture.



Pictured: Resident, Elsie.

Flipping good fun!

Residents also had a flipping good time celebrating Pancake Day on Shrove Tuesday. Everyone gathered in The Venue to take part in a very messy, but fun, pancake decorating afternoon. Everyone had a great time and there were lots of delicious creative ideas for all to enjoy.



Pictured: Resident, Jean.

Made with care

Belong's very own Angela Luckett, cultural & religious experience coordinator at **Belong Morris Feinmann**, Didsbury, has been drafted in to help with the Government's 'Made with Care' campaign, spending time championing social care with local news teams in Manchester.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)'s recruitment campaign aims to raise the profile of the adult care sector and encourage people to explore and apply for one of the many rewarding roles within care. As part of the drive, Angela joined forces with apartment tenant, Pauline Pike, to speak with Manchester Local TV (available on Sky) and sister publication, Manchester World.

You can watch Angela and Pauline's interview, here: <https://www.manchesterworld.uk/news/i-swapped-my-fashion-stylist-job-to-work-in-a-manchester-care-home-and-it-was-the-best-thing-ive-done-3544947>



Pictured: Angela Luckett, cultural & religious experience coordinator at Belong Morris Feinmann, with apartment tenant, Pauline Pike. (Images used with permission, credit: Manchester World).

Let's celebrate

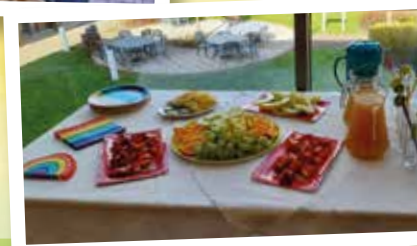
Belong Wigan resident, Brenda, wanted to celebrate her husband's 80th birthday.

So, as a surprise during his visit, we helped to set up a special afternoon tea for them to enjoy in their own private area of the village. Happy 80th birthday Fred, from everyone at Belong Wigan!



Brazil Day

Continuing the celebrations, **Belong Wigan** hosted a Brazilian themed day recently. The village was filled with lots of vibrant coloured decorations, fruit platters, and delicious mocktails which everyone enjoyed!



Leadership role

Caroline Newton, a longstanding member of the **Belong Atherton** team, has been appointed to the Support Manager role at **Belong Warrington**, taking on the responsibilities of becoming the registered care manager for the village.

Caroline commented: "I'm thrilled to be joining the Belong Warrington team. The village has a close-knit relationship with local people and Warrington is a wonderful town – I'm looking forward to working with the community for their care needs."



Bellissimo!

Meanwhile, **Belong Warrington** residents have been enjoying a variety of activities, an Italian themed day being just one of the ways we've been having fun. Residents decorated the households and prepared homemade pizzas whilst listening to Italian music.

Pictured (L-R): Residents, Percy, Dorothy and Peter.



Love and daffodils

Belong Crewe customers enjoyed a variety of ballads by singer, Britt, on Valentine's Day and enjoyed a selection of sweet treats including homemade shortbread, cupcakes and fresh strawberries dipped in chocolate, thanks to the bistro team.

Also, on St. David's Day, the bistro and activity teams worked with residents to bake Welsh Cakes which they enjoyed with a cup of tea afterwards.



Colleagues flying high for customers

Our brave colleagues at **Belong Macclesfield** have been flying high and taking a dive for our residents!

Helen, Liv and Chris (pictured) took to the sky for a parachute jump on the 18th of March to raise funds to host a garden party fit for a Queen! This summer everyone at the village is very much looking forward to being able to finally open their gates to family and friends and join the residents for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. After two years in a national lock-down, they are now ready to begin 2022 with a vibrant bang!

Donations will be used to provide residents with a celebration of a lifetime and honour Her Majesty the Queen with loved ones all around them.

If you would like to make a donation, you can do so via their Just Giving Page at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/belong-skydive>

Your support would be very much appreciated.



Ukraine Fundraiser

The knit and natter ladies, at **Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme**, wanted to raise money in support of the Ukraine so they have been busy creating crocheted and knitted sunflowers (the national flower for Ukraine) on keyrings.

The key rings are available at reception for a small donation. You can also support the people of Ukraine online at:

<https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>



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