



# Social Impact

2021-22







<b><i>Contents</i></b>	
<b><i>Chair's letter</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Year in numbers</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Quality focus</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Moving on from Covid</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Award-winning</i></b>	<b>8</b>
<b><i>People at the heart of our service</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Thriving through the arts</i></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Keeping active</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b><i>New developments</i></b>	<b>15</b>

# Chair's letter



The past year has been quite a journey as we gradually emerged from the worst of the pandemic. As a not-for-profit organisation, Belong has always invested in ensuring our villages offer welcoming spaces for the wider community and provide a hub for people looking for support with dementia. The impact of Covid for this model was particularly challenging and it is therefore a joy to see vibrancy rapidly returning to our villages.

The first milestone came when we were able to resume hosting shared activities in the village centre, bringing household residents and apartment tenants together for social opportunities, from musical events to church services and film screenings to creative workshops.

It was also positive to be able to resume our specialist day care service for people living in the wider community, as Experience Days returned to a number of locations in the autumn of 2021, and have been building steadily ever since.

Crucially for the wellbeing of household residents, visiting is now much more relaxed, with drop-ins once again the norm and the freedom to entertain guests in the households reinstated.

It's also heartening to be looking forward to welcoming the public back into the villages, as we expand our events and activities programmes and relaunch the *What's On* newsletters.

Given the challenges of the past period, it is testament to the strong leadership of Belong's village teams that we have maintained our vibrant community spirit throughout the pandemic, and I am confident that this will only grow in the year ahead.

While it is with sadness that I prepare to step down as Chair, I am pleased to be able to look back with pride on all that has been achieved to keep on improving outcomes for customer wellbeing and, importantly, to expand access to Belong's services as we have opened new villages, most recently in Chester.

In the past 12 months alone, there has been extensive recognition of Belong's success, including three wins at the Great North West Care Awards and the 3rd Sector Care Award for Creative Arts. I hope you enjoy reading about these accolades, as I look forward to hearing of Belong's continued positive impact beyond 2022.

It is perhaps an apt moment for change, as we move into an exciting new era of Belong, under the leadership of our new Chief Executive, Martin Rix, who joined the organisation in April 2022, bringing an impressive track record from his time at Norse Care. With both shared values and a fresh outlook, his appointment marks an opportunity for the organisation to build on its values-based approach to care, while continuing to innovate and evolve.

I look forward to following developments as the organisation moves ahead and I hand over to my successor as Chair, Robert Armstrong, with every confidence that he will steer the Board capably into this new era.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicola Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Nicola Brooks**

*Chair of the Board*

# Year in numbers

2021-22 was very much a year of two halves, initially dominated by Covid but gradually seeing villages return to greater vibrancy. Occupancy rose from 85.4% in the previous year to 92.9% in 2021/22, and our specialist day care service (Experience Days) was relaunched in a phased way from September 2021.



**760**  
household  
residents



**276**  
Belong at Home  
customers



**186**  
apartment  
tenants



**86**  
average household  
customer age



**92.9%**  
occupancy  
in Belong  
households



**57,000**  
hours of  
home care



**162**  
people accessed  
Belong's Admiral Nurse  
service



**9,000**  
planned events  
and activities



**65%**  
self-funding  
customers



**£1,196**  
per week  
– average fee rate



**72%**  
of customers  
living with dementia



**262**  
Experience Days  
provided



**35%**  
of customers  
publicly funded  
in households



**£972,000**  
household fee subsidy  
provided by Belong



**40%**  
of household  
customers received  
a nursing service



**8%**  
Average pay  
increase



# Quality focus

In a year that continued to be dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Belong retained its commitment to prioritising customers’ health and wellbeing, and our success in achieving positive outcomes was seen in a range of quality measures.

## Care Quality Commission (CQC)



**43% of Belong villages are rated OUTSTANDING, with all others rated GOOD**  
**All Belong at Home services are rated OUTSTANDING or GOOD**



**Carehome.co.uk**  
 The average **Belong village** rating is 9.8

**Belong** is ranked in the Top 20 Mid-sized Care Home Providers nationally



**Homecare.co.uk**  
 On average, **Belong at Home** scores 9.8 for its home care services

**Belong at Home Warrington** is ranked in the Top 20 Home Care Services in the North West

**Belong at Home** is ranked in the Top 20 Home Care Providers nationally

**Belong at Home Newcastle-under-Lyme** is ranked in the Top 20 Home Care Services in the West Midlands

	UK average 2020/21 <sup>1</sup>	Belong 2020/21	Belong 2021/22
Occupancy	79.4%	85.4%	92.9%
Staff costs per resident per annum	£31,402	£38,625 <sup>2,3</sup>	£39,317

1. Knight Frank 2021 Care Homes Trading Performance Review (for 2020/21) 2. Higher staff costs reflect higher rates of pay and a higher staffing ratio, promoting better customer outcomes 3. Lower household resident occupancy in 2020/21 than 2021/22

# Moving on from Covid



The year 2021-22 saw a gradual return to greater normality, as we emerged from the winter 2021 national lockdown to be able to welcome more people to our villages and relaxed the rules around visiting, further contributing to the wellbeing of our customers.

The Government officially ended Covid restrictions in wider society on 1 April 2022 as the financial year came to an end, leading to the subsequent re-opening of our bistros and other village centre facilities to the public, following consultation with our customers and the wider Belong community.



**CASE STUDY**

## Happy Birthday Fred!

Even with restrictions in place, Belong teams worked hard to reunite residents with their loved ones and facilitate memorable celebrations.

As a case in point, when Belong Wigan resident, Brenda, wanted to celebrate her husband's 80th birthday, the village team worked together to set up a surprise afternoon tea for them to enjoy in their own private area of the village.

## Health partnerships



Throughout the pandemic, Belong villages have continued to work closely with peers across the healthcare system, whether on accessing Covid-19

booster vaccinations for residents and colleagues or developing customers' personalised exercise programmes targeted at achieving specific health outcomes.

In Belong Warrington, Belong works closely with the Enhanced Health in Care Homes Support Team, while Belong Atherton continues to access specialist end-of-life training through the Wigan and Leigh 'Hospice in your care home' initiative.

## Listening to the experts

Our annual customer survey was conducted early in 2022 and generated almost 600 responses.

**Across all services, 93% of respondents would recommend Belong.**

*Likelihood to recommend Belong ratings by customer group:*

### HOUSEHOLDS

**95%**

### APARTMENT TENANTS

**84%**

### RELATIVES

**92%**

### BELONG AT HOME

**100%**

We reported on the findings at village and group level, creating and implementing action plans to ensure that we continue to improve our services.

#### Measures included:

- Introduction of the Lead Host role to drive consistency in catering quality
- Expansion of events and activity programmes
- Relaunch of *What's On* newsletters to boost communication
- Increased focus on initiatives to boost the wellbeing of apartment tenants



# Awards succes

Belong was distinguished with a number of high profile awards during the year.

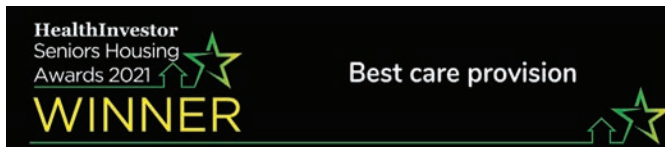


## 3rd Sector Care Awards 2022 Creative Arts Award

The Creative Arts Award was awarded to 'Where the Arts Belong', a unique collaboration between Liverpool

contemporary arts centre, Bluecoat, and Belong.

Participation was widened during the pandemic to help alleviate any loneliness experienced by Belong's apartment tenants, who gained greatly from the opportunity to come together for arts sessions led by professional artists.



## Health Investor Senior Housing Awards 2021 Best Care Provision

Belong took the title for Best Care Provision at the 2021 HealthInvestor Seniors Housing Awards.

The national award is recognition of Belong's innovative approach to care, including its pioneering village model and adoption of technology to improve outcomes for apartment tenants, as well as its response to the Coronavirus pandemic and commitment to sustainable growth.



## Great North West Care Awards 2021

- Workforce Development Award
- Social Care Covid Hero Team Award
- Housing with Care Award

Belong took home three Great North West Care Awards in 2021/22, including the Social Care Covid Hero Team Award.

The special award, assessed by an independent panel of adjudicators, applauded Belong's handling of the pandemic, with judges praising the "culture of transparency" and innovation to promote wellbeing during very challenging times. The Workforce Development Award was won by Belong's group-wide Practice Development Team, while Belong Crewe won the Housing with Care Award for support to apartment tenants during the pandemic.



## CEO Monthly's Chairperson Awards 2021

**Social Care Chairperson of the Year (North West England)**

Nicola Brooks, Chair of the Board for Belong, was named Social Care Chairperson of the Year (North West England) at CEO Monthly's Chairperson Awards 2021.

Recognising excellence in leadership, performance and longevity, the award is testament to Nicola's hard work, dedication and effort throughout the challenges faced during the global pandemic.

# People at the heart of our service



People are very much at the heart of our service and investing in our people is key to the organisation’s success. As a Gold accredited Investor in People, nurturing our workforce and ensuring Belong is a great place to work continues to be a top priority.

17,189

number of training courses provided

17

training courses completed per colleague (on average)

81

colleagues promoted from within the organisation

8%

average pay increase



Kelly Haddock was one of a number of Trainee Nursing Associates to join Belong during the year

We have retained our focus on attracting and retaining high calibre individuals, increasing the minimum pay to over £10 per hour for all colleagues regardless of age, and investing in our rewards package through a range of benefits and pension contributions. This helped with recruitment drives throughout the year and the onboarding of new starters.

Amongst these recruits, we welcomed a second, highly experienced and qualified Operations Manager to the organisation in Ali Gopaul and a second dementia specialist Admiral Nurse in Bridget Lawler.

A particularly exciting pilot launched during the year was the Trainee Nursing Associate programme, developed in conjunction with the University of Salford, enabling us to upskill a number of support workers. The trainee degree programme combines academic learning with hands-on training, supporting career development and customer care.



CASE STUDY

## Support Manager Josephine Mollison

A former coffee shop manager, Josephine Mollison progressed to one of the top roles at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, when she was appointed Support Manager for the village.

As the registered manager with the Care Quality Commission, she is responsible for ensuring the highest standards of nursing and dementia care for residents of each of the village’s households. She also makes sure that Support Workers receive the right training to meet these requirements and are up-to-date with best practice.

Josephine’s journey in care started in 2013 when she became a Support Worker at nearby Belong Crewe. Previously she was the manager of a coffee shop but felt that she hadn’t found real job satisfaction. Progression to becoming a Senior Support Worker came just a few months later. She credits her quick learning and development to excellent training and mentorship from the Belong team around her and went on to become Lead Senior Support Worker.

A little over a year ago, Josephine took on the temporary role of Assistant Support Manager at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, and this year she successfully interviewed for the Support Manager post. On what she enjoys most about her role, Josephine says: “It’s achieving the best outcomes for residents and helping them to live in the way that they want to live.”







## Nurse Jane Hughes



**Jane Hughes never thought she would dedicate her life to nursing older people at dementia care specialist, Belong Crewe. But over a decade ago, fresh from finishing a degree reading Criminology and Psychology, she unwittingly embarked on what would turn out to be the first day of a fulfilling vocation.**

She explains: “Like many graduates, I didn’t know what sort of job I wanted or even where to start. I applied for a role as a care assistant and, to be honest, it wasn’t really what I wanted to do, and so it surprised me when I fell in love with it straight away – I hadn’t anticipated how gratifying it would be.”

During the subsequent years, Jane worked hard to progress through senior care assistant and care team leader positions, before pursuing a nursing degree. Once qualified, she worked in local hospitals but felt something was missing and eventually returned to the Belong village on Brookhouse Drive, having secured the Registered General Nurse (RGN) post.

“I came back to social care because I missed the closeness and the relationships you can build with people, over time,” Jane continues. “Working in hospitals, you help patients get better; but then you never see them again. Nursing at Belong enables me to support older people’s physical health needs, as well as their social and psychological wellbeing, on a long-term basis, and so I can get to know them.”

“I’m now the village’s lead nurse which affords me autonomy to influence and implement my ideas, coach and train my own team, and continually learn whilst networking with local GPs and nurse practitioners. The best part is being able to work with and help our customers thrive independently in a compassionate setting – it’s a lovely way to spend your career.”

## Silver Pride

**Belong once again celebrated diversity, inclusion and the LGBT+ community, as Belong Crewe hosted its third successive Silver Pride event at the village.**

The aim of the annual event is to bring local people and organisations together and provide a safe space for everyone to feel confident being themselves. Sexual health charity, Body Positive North Wales & Cheshire, and Silver Rainbows, the older people’s LGBT+ network in Cheshire, were amongst those who attended.



# Thriving through the arts

Over the course of the year, a range of art forms and initiatives were harnessed to enhance wellbeing and involve both Belong customers and members of the wider community.

## Arts workshops at The Grosvenor

As part of the preparations to open Belong Chester, members of the public were invited to get their creative juices flowing in a series of art workshops for those living with dementia, and their loved ones.

The Meet and Make Art project was a collaboration between Belong and Bluecoat, Liverpool's centre for contemporary arts. Based at the Grosvenor Museum, participants were afforded the opportunity to get up-close with artefacts, rich in Cheshire's history, from the museum's collections.



*The Grosvenor provided the venue for Bluecoat art sessions*



*Meet and Make Art workshop*



*Creative studio within Belong*



*Belong Chester*

Artists commissioned by Bluecoat received extensive dementia awareness training in preparation for leading participants in the use of drawing, sculpture, music and dance, helping them to bring to life their personal stories and life experiences through art. The museum's experts were also on hand to advise on Cheshire's natural and social history, archaeology, fashion and fine art, which were used as a source of inspiration for the workshops.

## ***Gearing up for art residencies***

The project serves as a precursor to the Bluecoat artists taking up their art 'residencies' at Belong Chester.

Tabitha Moses, project facilitator for Bluecoat, added: "The Meet and Make Art project is unique in that it has been designed for both the person living with dementia and a loved one to enjoy equally, no matter their ability. It's about using art to explore creativity, as well as making connections with others."



## Music therapy unlocks engagement

**Music therapy sessions that help people connect, communicate and engage, struck the right chord with residents at Belong Morris Feinmann, who created their own concerts as part of a flourishing relationship with the UK's largest music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins.**

Classical cellist and student music therapist, Awen Blandford, works 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 Feinmann, added: "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."



Speaking of her experience, Awen Blandford said: "What's lovely is connecting with individuals whatever their abilities: whether it be using facial expressions or physical movements to inspire a musical conversation."

"Music is an alternative form of communication, a shared experience, a mood booster, and it can engage people where words alone often can't. I'm looking forward to developing my skills and musically meeting more of the wonderful residents here."

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."

## Involving the community

**Taking advantage of some early spring sunshine, Belong Macclesfield colleagues were joined by 11 staff from facilities management specialists, Sodexo, based at AstraZeneca's Macclesfield Campus. The volunteers lent their gardening, DIY and painting skills to spruce up the village's grounds for Belong's residents, apartment tenants and visitors to enjoy.**

Together, the team weeded and planted the grounds, then painted the fence, before constructing houses for birds and bugs, feeders for bees and butterflies and sowed wildflowers, in a bid to encourage more wildlife for customers to enjoy.

Meanwhile, inside the village, Belong colleagues and residents made bird cake and held talks on the importance of nature to climate change. After a round of hard-earned refreshments for the volunteers, supplied by the on-site Bistro, the day culminated with the judging of a poster competition to promote World Earth Day.

Gina Titley, Practice Development Facilitator at Belong Macclesfield, explains the thinking behind the initiatives: "We wanted to involve the community as much as possible in our spring activity plans and give everyone something to smile about. Nature has such a positive influence on our wellbeing, as does working with others, and so we invited those around us so everyone could benefit."

***"Music is an alternative form of communication, a shared experience, a mood booster, and it can engage people where words alone often can't"***



# Keeping active

As always, Belong engaged in a number of sporting initiatives to involve customers in exercise while creating opportunities for fun and social interaction.



## Belong Olympics

The delayed Tokyo 2020 games provided the opportunity to create some healthy competition across Belong’s seven care villages, with residents competing for podium success in their very own Olympics.

The Belong Games comprised a mix of activities designed by the villages’ dedicated activities teams and exercise specialists, specifically with older people and those living with dementia in mind. Highlights included armchair football, ribbon yoga and paper aeroplane javelin, and residents made their own flags and banners of support.

## Residents cycle to Lapland

Belong Atherton residents joined in some festive fundraising, putting their pedals to the metal as they set out to cycle to Lapland and around the world virtually. The initiative targeted the purchase of sensory equipment for fellow residents to enjoy.

From Rovaniemi in northern Finland, the gateway to the arctic circle, to snow hotels and Santa’s workshop, older people and those living with dementia at Belong Atherton care village spent a month cycling in aid of their cause. Colleagues at the care village also supported the cause via

cardio equipment to encourage friendly competition whilst adding to the kilometre count.



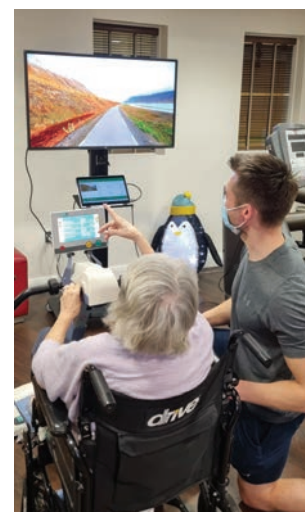
Exercise specialist, Jonathan Perrins, who led Belong Atherton’s efforts, said: “Our original goal was to complete 50km in a month and we quickly surpassed this milestone, instead aiming to rack-up as many kilometres as possible before Christmas Day. Everyone really enjoyed cheering each other on and there was a buzz of excitement to see how far we could get in the time.”

The fundraiser was made possible thanks to special equipment in

the village’s state-of-the-art gym which allows participants to explore breath-taking landscapes throughout the world via a linked screen to their exercise bikes, some of which are adapted to accommodate wheelchair users, affording all residents the opportunity to make a contribution.

Jonathan Perrins continues: “The benefits of regular exercise for older people are well documented and we’ve included the challenge in our residents’ bespoke fitness plans, which has been very motivational and makes exercise fun.

“Regular exercise enhances mood, improves sleep and provides stimulating activity, along with commonly-known physical benefits. All in all, it’s a winner and we hope the community will get behind us as we raise funds for sensory equipment which will continue to enhance the lives of our customers.”



**“Our original goal was to complete 50km in a month and we quickly surpassed this milestone”**



## Care village residents celebrate gym reopening

Residents living at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme celebrated the re-opening of the village’s specialist gym, which provides personalised one-to-one plans developed by the village’s exercise specialist, Georgina Cliff, working in conjunction with health professionals.

These are designed to enable customers to maintain mobility, prevent falls and manage a range of health conditions, according to individual assessments.

One apartment tenant pleased to see the reopening of the gym was John Yarwood, 77, who was a regular face at the on-site gym facility prior to the pandemic, using exercise to manage a septicaemia infection – also known as sepsis, or blood poisoning – following a knee operation over a decade ago.

Although Georgina had continued to support John to exercise outside his apartment, putting in place a special one-to-one programme to maintain the knee’s strength and movement, the fitness fanatic was relieved to be back in the gym and in his element, saying: “It’s great to be back on the exercise bike; I can’t thank Georgina enough for helping me make the best of the situation – I’m over the moon with how things have gone.”

Georgina Cliff said: “Exercise really is a key factor in maintaining people’s physical and mental health, whatever their age. It has been a lifeline for John and we’re pleased that we’ve been able to adapt during Covid and maintain exercise regimes that are vital to people’s health. The results have been incredible and it’s given John and his wife, Chris, the reassurance they can still enjoy a high quality of life.”



CASE STUDY

### Ken Edwards, resident of Patriot Household and Chief Gardener at Belong Crewe



Access to the outdoors is another important tenet of Belong’s approach, as experienced by Ken, usually to be found in the village’s dementia-friendly garden. Despite living with muscular dystrophy and using a wheelchair, that doesn’t stop him spending much of his time working on the garden’s raised flower beds and sharing his gardening expertise with others.

In April 2021, experience co-ordinator, Jess Butler, set-up ‘Belong in Bloom’, a club for all green-fingered customers to join and Ken was amongst the first to sign up. After investing a lot of time tending to the garden’s fruit and vegetable patch, herb garden and even helping to up-cycle some outdoor furniture, Ken quickly became known as ‘Chief Gardener’ throughout the village.

Much to Ken’s delight, he was even presented with his very own overalls to wear, with his new nickname emblazoned on the back. He said at the time: “This group has brought me a lot of happiness; everyone is working well as a team and I especially enjoy teaching the experience day team new things and I am learning a lot from them too.”

# New developments



Canalside Belong Chester



Hair salon



Household suite



The Nursery in Belong



Nursery garden



The Venue

## Belong Chester

**The year saw rapid progress with the development of Belong Chester, subsequently opened in summer 2022.**

In a first for Belong, the Chester village is home to a fully integrated children’s day nursery, creating extensive opportunities for intergenerational experiences – something which is already an important feature of life in Belong villages.

The state-of-the-art canalside development also offers a mix of independent living apartments and households where 24-hour support, including dementia and nursing care, is provided.

Belong Chief Executive, Martin Rix, said: “The beauty of the village model is that we are able to offer a range of spaces and experiences, and give people the choice to join in as much or as little of village life as they choose. This is crucial in ensuring residents continue to feel connected and integrated within society, and we are particularly excited that Belong Chester will have this very special and new element for us, which is the integration of a children’s nursery.”

The 25-place Nursery in Belong provides a high-quality care and learning environment for children from birth to five years, six days a week. It is operated by national charity, Ready Generations, and village and nursery teams work closely together to create a truly shared environment where children and older people can learn together and build an active, intentional and collaborative community that includes every generation.

Sue Egersdorff, founder of Ready Generations, added: “We are very excited to bring children and young families into the Belong village model. Children and older people are intuitively playful together and can bring so much joy to each other’s lives.”





## Belong Birkdale

**Work at Belong Birkdale, on Oxford Road, Southport, resumed following Belong's appointment of Whitfield & Brown to complete the care village build.**

Preparatory work has now commenced at the site close to Southport town centre, ahead of the building works restarting. The Widnes-based



contractor was selected for their experience and expertise in specialist dementia accommodation.

Scheduled to open by early 2024, Belong Birkdale will provide a high-specification home for over 100 people, living 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.

## Belong Wirral

**Belong successfully completed the purchase of land for its first waterside care village within Peel Land and Property's (Peel L&P) Wirral Waters scheme.**

Belong was granted planning permission for the site by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council in 2019, paving the way for enabling works to start on site.

The development is key to the shared vision of creating a dementia-friendly neighbourhood and, once complete, the village will provide a vital hub at the heart of the Wirral Waters project, with a range of inclusive spaces and facilities accessible to the local community.

Offering state-of-the-art care and accommodation for over 100 people, Belong Wirral will comprise six households with 24-hour nursing support and 34 one and two bedroom independent living apartments.







This publication is available in large format on request.

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