

BelongLife

AUTUMN 2022

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Double Carehome.co.uk Awards

Word from the team

Belong Chief Executive Martin Rix reflects on his first months in post and welcomes Susan Goldsmith to the executive team.

It has been a landmark year for Belong, as we celebrated the opening of Belong Chester – our first care village to integrate a children’s nursery into our model.

Evidence of impact is already visible for all to see. From shared storytelling to a range of creative initiatives for ‘Arts in Care Homes’ month, intergenerational experiences abound. Indeed, it’s unlikely you’ll visit without hearing the patter of tiny feet in the Bistro or having the opportunity to browse the creations of residents and children, often working alongside one another. If you haven’t yet visited, it’s certainly worth popping in.

On the same day as Chester’s opening, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme took part in the final leg of the Queen’s Baton Relay as it headed through Staffordshire towards the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. We were deeply honoured that the village Heritage Gallery was selected as part of the official route, testament to how firmly embedded it has become in the life of the local community. Local school children, ex-servicemen and women, dignitaries, circus artists and dancers all helped stage a vibrant celebration that will live on in the memories of colleagues and customers for many years to come.

Elsewhere, there has been wonder and joy in a whole host of ways, including music-making in Belong Warrington, Great North West Care Award shortlistings at Belong Crewe, as well as at Belong at Home Wigan, partying at Belong Macclesfield as it marked its 15th anniversary, Pride celebrations at Belong Atherton and a special exhibition at Belong Morris Feinmann, commemorating the experiences of our resident Holocaust survivors.

As a group, we also celebrated being once again ranked in the Top 20 care home groups and Top 20 home care groups by carehome.co.uk/ homecare.co.uk respectively, testament to the hard of all our teams.

I would like to thank our outgoing Chief Operating Officer Stacey McCann for her contribution in leading our teams to their respective successes. We wish her a fond farewell as she starts her retirement, and welcome Susan Goldsmith to the executive team, following a rigorous recruitment process to identify Stacey’s successor. Promoted from Operations Manager, Sue is well-known in our villages and I look forward to working closely with her as we steer Belong into the future.

Martin Rix Belong Chief Executive

Belong has been listed as a Top 20 Mid-size Care Home Group by leading online review site Carehome.co.uk, with Belong Atherton and Belong Morris Feinmann achieving regional distinctions.

The Carehome.co.uk rankings are based on verified customer reviews, with Belong achieving an average review score of 9.8 out of 10 from residents and their relatives across its eight villages in the North West for the past year.

In addition to the group award, Belong’s care villages in Atherton and Didsbury, Greater Manchester, were also ranked in the Top 20 Care Homes in the North West list, with both achieving review scores of 9.9 out of 10.

Customers leaving reviews are asked to rate all aspects of a care home’s offering, including its people, care and support, management, facilities, and overall value for money.

One recent five-star review from a relative of a resident at Belong Atherton said: “My mother transferred to Belong in October. The difference in the standard of care between Belong and the previous home is huge, with my mother receiving the relatively intensive care her age and medical condition necessitate. I had high hopes of Belong from personal recommendations, and those hopes have, if anything, been surpassed.”

Another five-star review from a relative of a resident at Belong Morris Feinmann said: “We would wholeheartedly recommend the Belong Morris Feinmann Village. In our opinion, this is the standard that other care homes should be aiming to aspire to. With much gratitude and a huge thank you to the Manager and all the Staff at Belong for the love, care, and attention given to our beloved mum.”

Commenting on the results, Belong Chief Operating Officer Sue Goldsmith said: “We are delighted by a number of recent awards wins. Continued success at the Carehome.co.uk awards is a testament to consistency in achieving the highest standards of care and a reflection of the hard work and dedication of our teams, not least because the listings are based on reviews by people that we support and their relatives.”

You can read further reviews of Belong on www.carehome.co.uk.

“ I had high hopes of Belong from personal recommendations, and those hopes have, if anything, been surpassed. ”



Belong appoints Chief Operating Officer

Sue Goldsmith has been appointed to the post of Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Belong. A registered nurse and experienced social care professional, Sue was previously Operations Manager with the organisation and joins the executive team as Belong’s outgoing COO, Stacey McCann, retired at the end of September.

Sue will work alongside chief executive Martin Rix, who took the helm at Belong in April, and Chief Finance Officer, Chris Hughes, working to expand the reach of the organisation’s services.

Sue’s experience across frontline nursing and senior management positions spans three decades, including as Head of Dementia and Head of Care Improvement at Four Seasons Health Care and as Director of Care Quality and Dementia for a care coaching consultancy, where she drove improvements at care providers, supporting them to achieve CQC Outstanding ratings.

A trained dementia care mapper, Sue has developed a number of dementia care models and frameworks. Her work has been published in academic papers, and she is a contributing author of an Amazon top-selling book focused on person-centred dementia care.

Sue commented: “Working at Belong has given me real insight into the organisation’s values and the real passion that our people bring to supporting a diverse base of customers. We have huge talent and opportunity to build upon and I feel incredibly privileged and excited to be joining the leadership team.”



Susan Goldsmith, Belong Chief Operating Officer

Belong Chester now open!



Belong Chester

After a labour of love to bring our vision for Belong Chester to fruition, we are delighted to be welcoming the people of Chester into our latest village, which integrates a children's nursery to make our community more vibrant than ever. Here are a few reasons to pay us a visit.

Take a tour of a household

At the heart of every Belong village are our world-class nursing and dementia facilities, where every aspect of the environment is designed to maximise independence and a sense of belonging.



Enjoy lunch in The Bistro

Open to the public, the Belong bistro provides a stylish setting where residents and members of the community can meet with family and friends.



See a ground-breaking concept in action

The Nursery in Belong Chester is a place where children thrive in an environment enriched by stimulating learning opportunities using high-quality resources, a range of experts and connection with people of all generations.



Stay active

Our gym features specialist equipment and technology supporting older people to enjoy targeted exercise, assisting with mobility, balance, strength, stamina and falls prevention.



Be pampered

Our stylish hair salon and nail bar offers a choice of hair and beauty services for ladies and gents



Vibrant events programme

Request a copy of our bi-monthly *What's On* programme for the latest news of upcoming events and opportunities, including music, arts, gardening, talks, walks and more

Request a tour

To arrange a visit, contact the village team on 01244 445500 or call in at any time.

Welcome to BELONG CHESTER

Everyone moving into our village is greeted with a 'new home' card, hand-designed by local school children. Pictured is Naomi Shetty, then a year 1 pupil from Belgrave Primary School, along with her winning design. Congratulations Naomi!



Happy anniversary Eleanor and Doug!

In August, the village celebrated its first wedding anniversary when well travelled customers, Eleanor and Doug, reached their 60-year diamond milestone.

Doug was one of the first customers to move into one of our Chester households, whilst Eleanor has her own apartment in the village, making it easy to enjoy life together with appropriate support in place.

Speaking of what they believe is the key to a happy marriage, the couple said: "You have to love each other; a partnership is about giving, as well as taking. After 60 years, you get to know each other's ways, so everything becomes second nature.

"Belong Chester feels like we have finally come home. Everyone has been wonderful, so courteous, so helpful – nothing is too much trouble. Our family are so happy we're settled at the village and we feel we have a second family here. We'd also like to give a special thank you for the care and support we've received. Here's to more years together in Belong Chester!"



Image credit www.life-photo.co.uk

Nelko's culinary challenge

Earlier this year, the village's bistro and catering manager, Nelko Yordanov, showcased cooking Belong-style at the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) Care Chef of the Year competition, after landing a place in the regional finals.

Up against the clock and other challengers, Nelko whipped up innovative and exciting courses, designed especially for those living in care environments. Sadly, this year wasn't to be his, but we're all very proud of his achievement reaching the regional finals – well done, Nelko!

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 **Bill Parton (94)** for whom, what was expected to be a short-term stay at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme has turned out to be a second home where all his friends are.

When we interviewed Bill, he was staying at a holiday home, enjoying all the delights the North Wales coast has to offer. He'd already visited the towns of Abersoch, Pwllheli and Porthmadog, making all the trips by car – quite remarkable, given he had a hip operation only a few months ago.

Bill moved into the village following a fall in November last year which had resulted in him breaking a hip, or as he put it: "My leg wasn't attached to my body." He continues, "When I came out of hospital, they wanted to put me in a home and I wasn't willing to go into one. Fortunately, I was put in touch with the Belong team and they had a one-bed apartment available, so it became my temporary home. I had a great time – I became friends with everyone. People used to pop in, pull up a chair and we'd have a right laugh. I spent Christmas and a birthday there, it was wonderful."

Fighting fit

Due to both his age and the pandemic, clinicians were initially unwilling to carry out such a big operation. Eventually, in June, Bill underwent the procedure at a private hospital, which was also the first one they'd carried out since the pandemic started. It was a success and on the road to recovery, Bill struck up another strong relationship, this time with the village's exercise specialist, Georgina Cliff.

Pictured (top): Bill with assistant support manager, Lisa Lewis (L) and support manager, Josephine Mollison (right) and (below) Bill enjoying his passion for driving.



"I spent a lot of time in the exercise studio with George. She got me walking again, using crutches and a frame for our physiotherapy sessions. It definitely wasn't easy; it was a challenging process and she really looked after me," he says.

Returning home

After a month, Bill was back to good health but whilst his body was ready to return home, he certainly wasn't. He continues, "It was a real battle with myself to go home, and there were lots of hugs and kisses when I left. Belong has helped me so much – they really believed in me, if that makes sense? I'd have taken one of the team home with me if I could; the support workers have since told me that if I'd asked at the time, they would have had a bag packed by the front door!"

The good news is, Bill hasn't had to wait long to see all his new friends again, as he was back at the village, just a few weeks ago. This time, he enjoyed a coffee with the chocolate cake he made for everyone, and was brought up-to-date on the latest gossip before sharing tales of his trips to the coast. "I've made friends for life, here. I may have moved out but I'm still part of the family. I'd recommend it to everyone."

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



Belong celebrates 15 years serving Macclesfield community

Pictured: David Rutley MP for Macclesfield (left), celebrates with Belong Macclesfield, including general manager, Caroline Ray (2nd to right) and CEO, Martin Rix (right)

Belong Macclesfield has been dazzling in high glamour and glitz, as the village brought together its customers, families, and the local community for a crystal themed birthday party, celebrating 15 years since opening its doors.

The sweet fifteen was marked with live entertainment, including big band performances from Rich Swings, and the contorting skills of a balloon sculpture artist. Tiaras were on-trend as guests dressed up to the nines for the lavish occasion, whilst sipping bubbly and sharing happy memories of village life over the years with guest of honour, David Rutley, Member of Parliament for Macclesfield. Later, residents were wined and dined with a three-course meal, before tucking into a confectionery cart hosting their favourite treats.

Belong Macclesfield opened in Upton Priory in autumn 2007, establishing a new era in specialist dementia care, and has enabled hundreds of customers to enjoy an active life whilst living within a vibrant community. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has recognised its consistent high standards, with the most recent full inspection awarding care provision 'Outstanding' status.

Caroline Ray, general manager at Belong Macclesfield, commented: "Celebrating 15 years is a wonderful feeling. We are a strong member of our community; pleased to be experts in dementia care, bringing professionalism and an abundance of love and compassion. Would you believe we have 12 colleagues who have been with us from day one? – It's testament to the dedication of Belong as an employer and the support of everyone around us."

David Rutley, MP for Macclesfield, added: "Many congratulations to Belong on 15 years of serving their residents and tenants in Macclesfield and on being an active part in our community. Feedback from families who have experience with Belong's village is very positive. I wish the team continued success in providing this much needed social care locally over the decades ahead."



Holocaust stories exhibited at Belong Morris Feinmann

A special exhibition documenting the experiences of five Holocaust refugees and a survivor living at Belong Morris Feinmann village in Didsbury, has been unveiled in their home's synagogue, honouring them and the millions of Jews who suffered persecution in the hands of the Nazis in World War II.

Frances Waldek (100), Gisela Feldman BEM (98), Frania Strauss (97), Sonja Sternberg BEM (96), Hans Rose (94), and Peter Mittler (91), have each provided their own words about life during the traumatic era and the struggles they faced. Their remarkable stories, some handwritten, accompany poignant portraits which have been prominently displayed for posterity.

Angela Lockett, religious and cultural coordinator at Belong Morris Feinmann spearheaded the project. She said: "The Holocaust touches the lives of all of us and the foundations of our care village were borne out of our plight, having been originally set-up by Jewish refugee, Morris Feinmann, to help those fleeing Europe in WWII and settle here in Manchester.

"We're very passionate about preserving history and that is the aim of the project, to document an important part of our story and to educate future generations."



Pictured: Peter Mittler at the exhibition in the village's synagogue



Main image: (L-R) Frances Waldek, Angela Lockett, Peter Mittler and Gisela Feldman.

Top inset image: Holocaust exhibition at Belong Morris Feinmann.

The initiative, supported with a generous contribution from The Feinmann Trust, was inspired by The Prince of Wales commissioning leading artists to paint seven Holocaust survivors for an exhibition at Buckingham Palace, earlier this year.

Angela Lockett continues: "We shared a wonderful L'chaim with family and friends for the unveiling of the portraits. It was very moving and it's important that no-one forgets our past – we invite everyone from the community to come and have a look."

The Holocaust exhibition can be viewed at Belong Morris Feinmann. Members of the wider community are also invited to join in village activities, including Club Thursday, the Jewish social and cultural society; coffee and kuchen; and rabbi-led discussion sessions. Contact Belong Morris Feinmann on 0161 804 4200 for more information.





Awards Season

It's been another busy period for Belong on the awards front, with recognition for villages and individuals across the organisation.

Here is a summary of the story so far.

Gold Standards Framework: Platinum Award

Following re-assessment for the quality of our end-of-life support, in line with the Gold Standards Framework, three Belong villages earned platinum awards for their track record in ensuring a 'gold standard' death for those with us at end-of-life. Atherton, Crewe and Wigan were all found to be following the highest standards, scoring between 58 and 60 out of 60 in their assessments.

Julie Armstrong-Wilson, Lead Nurse for GSF said: "Congratulations to all organisations that have successfully achieved accreditation and reaccreditation. The last two years have been an incredibly difficult time for all health and social care providers and taking the time to complete their GSF accreditation is to be commended."



Pictured: Representatives from the three teams collected their GSF awards.

Recognition for Belong Atherton End-of-Life Care

Belong Atherton was the stand-out winner at the Wigan Borough Palliative and End of Life Care Learning Hub Awards, earning three prestigious awards as follows:

- **Jemma Sharratt won Nurse of the Year**
- **Registered Nurse, Paul Woodcock, won the Peer-Nominated Awards**
- **Belong Atherton won the Most Innovative Setting Award**

The Atherton team have impressed the judges consistently in the six years since the awards (formerly known as Wigan & Leigh Hospice in your Care Home Awards) were launched.

Jenny Yates, Service Manager Age Well at Wigan Council presented the Peer-Nominated Award to Paul Woodcock, saying: "To be respected and appreciated by your fellow colleagues is not only a great honour, it is a true reflection of how you are seen by others as a professional, compassionate, caring person. The winner of this award is someone who inspires others and is a real champion for palliative and end of life care."



The Belong Atherton Team



Lead Nurse, Jemma Sharratt, Belong Atherton



Registered Nurse, Paul Woodcock, Belong Atherton

Year of Creativity Award

Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme won the prestigious 'Year of Creativity' Award from NAPA, the National Association for the Provision of Activity for its use of the arts to tackle loneliness amongst older people living at the care village as we emerged from lockdown.

We Belong Together (WBT) was devised through Belong's partnership with Liverpool's contemporary arts centre, the Bluecoat to support customers residing at Belong care villages when government intervention placed them in lockdown, limiting social interaction. Critically acclaimed artists ran weekly virtual sessions with tenants, using a range of art forms, including ceramics, sound and storytelling.

Judges were impressed by the increased wellbeing experienced by those involved, and more widely, Belong's use of creativity and arts as part of its approach to dementia care. They praised the village team as 'truly dedicated to thinking creatively, trying new things and involving everyone, every day.'

Emma Palin, experience coordinator at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, said: "We're thrilled to accept this arts award, both for us and for the Bluecoat. Their workshops gave our customers something to look forward to during a very challenging time."



Pictured (left to right): Georgina Cliff, Emma Palin, Georgina Chell, Chris Donnelly, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme



Lead Senior Support Worker, Eleanor Bennett, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme

Rising Star

There was also recognition for Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme Lead Senior Support Worker, Eleanor Bennett, who was named a finalist in the Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care Awards, due to be announced in London on 30 November.

Eleanor is someone who truly puts customers at the heart of everything she does, showing genuine care and compassion in all her interactions with those around her and going to the ends of the earth to support older people in the way that they wish.

Having joined the village as a senior support worker three years ago, Eleanor has also shown commitment to her own skills and career development, progressing to a lead role in her time at the village. Her compassion and professionalism make her a true asset to the team.

Great British Care Awards

It was a strong showing for Belong at the regional heats of the Great British Care Awards. Congratulations to all our finalists across the North West and West Midlands, who were shortlisted in some extremely competitive categories, and we were absolutely delighted to celebrate two award wins on the night.

Sharon Haigh, Community Support Worker for Belong at Home Wigan won Home Care Worker of the Year

Sharon is a model home care worker who is passionate about supporting customers to the very best of her ability. Customers comment on how attentive and perceptive she is to any change in their wellbeing.



North West Finalists

Debra Moore, Community Senior Support Worker at Belong at Home Wigan was shortlisted for the Dignity in Care Award

Debbie leads by example; her kind nature and understanding of dignity shine through and she has a positive influence on those around her.

Jess Butler, Experience Co-ordinator at Belong Crewe was shortlisted for the Activity Organiser award

Jess is a catalyst in the village, always coming up with new ideas to enrich the lives of people in the village through events and activities that match their interests.

Jane Hughes, Village Nurse Manager at Belong Crewe was shortlisted for the Social Care Nurse Award

Jane always puts people before tasks and is ready to adapt whatever she is doing to ensure a resident is in wellbeing, taking a holistic view of each individual's support.

David Bithell, Support Worker at Belong Crewe was shortlisted for the Dementia Carer Award

David is skilled and compassionate in supporting people with dementia. A natural communicator, he is able to make real breakthroughs with people by focusing on individual abilities and shared moments in the present.

Belong Crewe's Britannia Team won the End-of-Life Award



The team demonstrated exceptional end-of-life support throughout the pandemic and have continued to show innovation and dedication in ensuring the best possible experience in people's last weeks of life.

West Midlands Finalist

Georgina Chell, Experience Support Worker at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, shortlisted for the Care Home Worker Award

Georgina brings happiness and creative fun into everyday practice. She is a passionate individual with the ability to make everyone smile, excelling in person-centred care through promoting individual choice while ensuring needs are met to a high standard.



Getting creative for National Arts in Care Homes Day

Any opportunity to celebrate the arts is welcome in Belong, so when it came to National Arts in Care Homes Day, our communities were quick to set to work, bringing their usual creative flair to a range of projects following this year's 'Field of Flowers' theme.

Belong Chief Operating Officer, Sue Goldsmith, explains: "The arts form a big part of our experience programme for our customers. The advantages of using creative expression for meaningful occupation is that everyone can take part, whatever their ability, and it provides sensory-rich experiences with a sense of purpose and achievement for the creator."

In Belong Macclesfield, customers pooled their drawing, painting and creative talents to achieve their goal of creating one of the town's biggest-ever floral displays.



Pictured: Belong Macclesfield

Customers, families and community visitors in Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme produced a spectacular wall art piece, featuring four thousand individual fingerprints in vibrant colours, arranged across canvases to create a display feature in their village's integrated heritage gallery.



Pictured: Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme

The event took on an intergenerational aspect in Belong Crewe, with local children invited to an intergenerational playdate session, run in partnership with nearby St. Andrew's Church. Participants paired up to paint one another's hands, used as printing tools to make a colourful arrangement.



Pictured: Gillian Wakely, Belong Crewe

Residents at Belong Chester reminisced as they painted, recollecting happy times involving flowers and nature shared, including weddings, family visits to parks and gardening achievements.



Pictured: Barbara Harrison, Belong Chester

In Didsbury, Belong Morris Feinmann customers painted tributes to Her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.



Pictured: Janet Semark, Belong Morris Feinmann

Forget-me-nots were the theme at Belong Wigan, where tenants and residents came together to create a spectacular display, currently being exhibited at the village.



Pictured: Belong Wigan

Promoted by the National Activity Providers Association (NAPA), the National Day of Arts in Care Homes is funded by The Baring Foundation and The Rayne Foundation, and is designed to encourage and champion arts engagement in care settings, highlighting the wellbeing benefits for all involved.

Memory Lane...

This issue of Memory Lane features the life of Doreen Kelly, Coronation House resident at Belong Crewe. As told by her niece, Karen, she shares with us how her auntie dedicated her life to her community and how it earned her an MBE.

My auntie Doreen was born in Liverpool in 1926 and grew up with her two sisters, Jean and Margaret, in the suburb of Litherland. As a child, my auntie spent much of her time playing outdoors and attending the local church youth club, where she made many friends.

From an early age, auntie Do (as we called her) loved academia; she really enjoyed French lessons and art classes. It was at grammar school she earned the nickname "Dickie" and upon graduating in 1942, she began her career as a typist for a shipping company at the Cunard building on the Liverpool docks. With some motivation from her colleagues and my grandad, she decided to pursue her passion and was accepted to St Katharines, a college in Liverpool. However, before training commenced, she was evacuated to Keswick, Cumbria, owing to the college being taken over as a hospital. Instead, she trained to become a teacher in the Lake District, and once qualified she returned to Liverpool to teach year 6 at a primary school.

A labour of love

During her time at the youth club she met a man, Leonard Kelly, who worked on the railway, and they fell in love, marrying in 1954. As was the case back then she had to give up teaching once she was married. They both loved to travel and explored a lot of places by rail, travelling as far as Austria and Switzerland.



Eventually, auntie Do and uncle Leonard (known as Skip from his Territorial army days) and their infant son Robert moved to Didsbury, Manchester. At the age of 10 months, he'd sadly had a febrile convulsion and underwent ground breaking neurosurgery at Liverpool's Walton Hospital. Their new Mancunian provided Robert better schooling opportunities, and Auntie Do worked as a teacher at nearby Ladybarn School, which still exists today.

Being new to the area, she wanted to meet new people, so she joined a support group, Didsbury Care, which organised coffee mornings, collected shopping and prescriptions, and offered help for people who needed it. My auntie is a very caring person, she was always here, there and everywhere, helping anyone that needed support in the community, and making hundreds of mince pies in the process!

Queen's Honours

One of her favourite things to do was to write to public figures and be an advocate for social causes – she was never quiet when it came to expressing her opinion and fighting injustices. My auntie became very well known for the work she'd done, at one point she was asked to come out of retirement to act as headmistress at a school in a centre with epileptic children. Ultimately, her work earned her an award in the late Queen's Birthday Honours 2010. She received an MBE for services to the community, presented to her by the Lord Mayor and Lord Lieutenant of Manchester.

Today, she lives happily at Belong Crewe where she loves taking part in art activities, cooking classes, and socialising with the other residents. It makes me happy to see her enjoying herself and to see her continuing to smile in the same way she did when she was younger.

1. Doreen with her husband Leonard on their wedding day
2. Doreen receiving her MBE for services to the community
3. Doreen with Belong Crewe support worker, Megan Shaw
4. Doreen sharing happy moments with her niece Karen
5. Doreen enjoying travels with her son Robert and her husband Leonard

ROLL UP ROLL UP

Exhibition honouring father of modern circus launches in Newcastle-under-Lyme



The circus has come to Newcastle-under-Lyme as a new exhibition paying homage to Philip Astley, the father of modern circus, opens at the Belong Heritage Gallery.

Multi-skilled performer and illusionist, Andrew Van Buren, played ringmaster, with mayor, Councillor Gillian Burnett, local schoolchildren, and Belong's customers; joining for a masterclass in circus performance and a special speech from the showman about his life. Van Buren's family are creators of AstleyFest, the town's celebration of modern circus, and have loaned many of the items for the gallery's collections.

The general public are now invited to come one, come all, to the Belong Heritage Gallery's reminiscence lounge documenting the town's rich history, which has been transformed into a big top, with memorabilia from bygone eras of circus entertainment, both here in the UK and from across the globe.

Historical artefacts on show include Harry Houdini's original handcuffs, early twentieth century juggling balls and adverts promoting tours in Newcastle, Stoke-on-Trent and further afield, in Japan, Russia and the USA. A dressing-up area, complete with humorous costumes and funhouse mirrors, offers a playful experience for guests.



Belong residents are also getting in on the action, having been supported in making handmade circus-themed earthenware, including clowns, animals and equipment to go on show.

Councillor Gillian Burnett, Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme, added: "It was wonderful to join with the classes and fun with Andrew Van Buren and the Belong team; the gallery is an asset to the town centre and new circus exhibition is great."

The circus exhibition is open for public viewing at the Belong Heritage Gallery, Lower Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 2RS. For more information call 01782 986300.

Main image: Back row: (L-R) Sue Goldsmith, Belong Chief Operating Officer; Andrew Van Buren, illusionist; Councillor Gillian Burnett, Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Front row, seated (L-R): Belong customers, Beryl and Jean. Inset: Schoolchildren from St. Mary's Catholic Primary enjoy the circus masterclass



Living the Values

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

For this issue, we speak with Natalie Cope, receptionist at Belong Atherton, who shares her experiences working as part of the town's friendliest front-of-house team.

Can you tell us more about your role?

I love working on reception! I really do; I'm the first person our visitors meet when they walk through the door, so it's very important to provide a warm Belong welcome and make that good first impression. Over the years, I've built relationships with everyone – customers, families and colleagues – by making an extra special effort to get to know everyone by name and address them when they come in. It's something that I really pride myself on.

How did your Belong career begin?

After having children, I was looking for a new job to get back into work when I came across the vacancy at the village. To be honest, I hadn't heard of Belong (the village hadn't been open for long at that point) but after some research, I quickly fell in love with the organisation and was fortunate enough to secure the job. That was eight years ago, which goes to show how much I enjoy it here.

What would you say is the most rewarding part of your job?

Stories. Everyone has their own personal life story and I take pleasure in listening to them. I've a particularly close relationship with many of our tenants, some of them call me their daughter! I've looked after their pets when they've been away from the village (not at the reception desk, of course!). I always refer to Belong as my second family.



Pictured: Natalie holding her colleague recognition certificate and reward.

You won the village's July Champion recognition award; tell us more?

When it's a tenant's birthday, I send them a card to make it special for them and I've been told it has a positive impact on those who receive it.

I've also got quite a good knowledge of the systems that we use front of house and if there's an update or we get a new one installed, I like to fiddle about and ace it. Often colleagues will come to me if they need a helping hand. I've trained new starters on it, too.

It sounds like you embody Belong's values through and through. What do you get up to outside of work?

My two children take up most of my time, of course! When it's time to unwind after they've gone to bed, I get together online with a few friends and we can catch-up and have a bit of friendly competition on the Xbox.

Join the team

We currently have a number of opportunities to join our award-winning teams. Scan the QR code or visit us online to view our current vacancies: www.belong.org.uk



In the Spotlight: Ruth Sandbach

For this issue of *Belong Life*, we spoke to Ruth Sandbach, who is the newly appointed manager of the Nursery in Belong at the recently opened Chester care village.

Ruth's career in early years education was kick-started when she was studying childcare at college in the Wirral, where she grew up and, after completing a placement at the college's nursery where she provided cover for two weeks, she was offered a permanent position.

"Childcare was always something that I wanted to do. When I was in high school, I undertook work experience at a local primary school, and I knew then that I had a passion for it," she says.

After two years living and working in Australia, Ruth returned to the UK to work at the same nursery within the college that she studied childcare, this time as an Early Years Practitioner. She was later promoted to Team Leader, supervising a team of five colleagues, before progressing to become deputy manager, and then manager, of the nursery, a role which she held for nearly six years.

Ruth spent 18 years at the college in total before becoming Nursery Manager for a local nursery, with a focus on learning and development, including identifying opportunities for improvement and sharing knowledge of best practice with other nurseries in the group. It was there that she encountered the benefits of intergenerational engagement.

"We took the children to the care home across the road from the nursery for an hour and a half each week to take part in activities, such as arts and crafts, storytelling and music and movement. It was something that I really loved: seeing how both children and older people responded."

When Ruth was told of the position of Nursery Manager at Belong Chester advertised, she knew it was for her.

"I loved the concept. I was smiling all the way through the interview. I've never felt that way about a job before."



Also it plays to my leadership strengths – my work has almost always involved leading teams, and I enjoy supporting people to be their best, as well as being in the local community."

As Nursery Manager, Ruth is responsible for leading the nursery team and ensuring safeguarding and compliance – an educational institution, the Nursery in Belong must adhere to Ofsted standards. She also works with village teams, including the experience coordinator and Belong's Intergenerational Practice Lead, Sophie McKeon, to plan multigenerational opportunities.



Volunteer profile

In this feature, we recognise the outstanding contributions of volunteers to the Belong community. This issue, we give our thanks to Jackie Mesrie, who has been leading coffee mornings at Belong Morris Feinmann since it opened its doors five years ago.

If you come along to one of Belong Morris Feinmann's coffee mornings, you'll hear the sound of live music ringing through the village, accompanied by the aroma of coffee and cake, and friends chatting to one another.

Coffee mornings have become a weekly tradition at the village; every Monday, volunteer and social chairman of the village's Social Committee, Jackie Mesrie, and her team arrive early to set everything up before being joined by residents and apartment tenants who enjoy their favourite hot drink and snacks, accompanied by live musical performances, with some also joining in with the singing!

For our Jewish customers, Belong Morris Feinmann's chaplain, Rabbi Perez,

shares in the conversation, befriending customers as well as giving readings and providing spiritual support.

Jackie is perhaps one of our longest serving volunteers, having organised coffee mornings since 1999 at the former Morris Feinmann care home, which neighboured her mother's house. She continues to run them today, where they have grown to be as popular as ever. For Jackie, the event is more than just providing something to eat and drink; it's about sharing stories with each other and making friends with fellow residents. She tells us: "With the help of my lovely volunteers and the fantastic team at Belong, we get to do something good for everyone so we can all have a great start to the week."

"We work as a complete, integrated community which cares about our people. Everything we do comes down to our love and respect for the elders in our community and those with dementia. We enjoy hearing the stories they have to tell us, and we enjoy making them smile – that's what the coffee mornings are about."

Thanks for making Monday mornings extra special for all of our customers, Jackie – we're really grateful for the work you and your team do, and everyone at Belong thanks you for your contribution.

Pictured (from left to right): David Sassoon – volunteer pianist; Jackie Mesrie; Sylvia Goldstone; Lynda Sable; Seona Macfarlane and Barbara Goodman.

Noticeboard

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

Musician helps make melodies

Music therapy sessions that help people connect, communicate and engage, have hit the right note with residents at **Belong Warrington**, who are enjoying the benefits of creative expression as part of a flourishing relationship with the UK's largest music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins.

Pam Thomson, an experienced music therapist and Goldsmiths, University of London alumna, is working with customers in small groups and one-to-one to translate their personal experiences, memories and observations of the world through the power of music. Supporting the residents as they contribute as they please using instruments including tambourines, drums and their voices, she matches their energy and tone of voice to build a connection. Pam explains: "It's very person-centred and ability doesn't matter; it's about going with their flow and as the narrative unfolds, the residents become more confident with their playing and singing. The result is a sense of social connection, purpose and having an identity, and this impacts positively on people's wellbeing."

Pictured: Arthur Burton (91), Belong Warrington experience day customer, enjoys one of the music sessions with Pam Thomson from Nordoff Robbins.



Fifty years of Pride

Proving that love is love at any age, a group of residents from **Belong Atherton**, flew their flag at Wigan Pride, championing their support of older people in the LGBT+ community in the town's annual parade.

Customers and support workers from the village celebrated this year's sunshine, energy and vitality theme at the event which also coincides with fifty years since the UK's first Pride, hosted in London in 1972.

Kim Calland, experience coordinator at Belong Atherton, said: "This year's Pride is especially important as our customers have lived through decades of law changes, evolving attitudes and eventually, acceptance of LGBT+ people in society."

Pictured: (Top R) Belong Atherton Experience coordinator, Kim Calland and customer, Peter Adshead, with Greater Manchester Police. Lower left (L-R) Paul Heaton, Peter Adshead, Bernard Riley, Ken Tunstall and Gillian Annable and Lower right (L-R) Paul Heaton, Peter Adshead, and support worker, Abi Booth.



Belong at Home's Big Coffee Morning

Belong at Home teams took part in Macmillan Cancer Support's World's Biggest Coffee Morning, helping to raise vital funds to support the charity helping those living with cancer

Residents, tenants and our customers in the communities came together with colleagues to enjoy coffee, cake, raffles and chatter, and together, raised over £1,100!

Thank you and well done to everyone involved and for your generous donations. A very worthy cause, we say.

Pictured: Colleagues from the Belong at Home team at the cake sale.



Roald Dahl Day

Belong Macclesfield customers celebrated Roald Dahl Day on 13 September, in The Venue, with a special screening of the film and entertainment by the village's very own Oompa Loompas!

They enjoyed Wonka's chocolate river, indulgent chocolate mousse and hot cocoa, with a sample of Wonka's fizzy drink and confectionary from the chocolate room, to top off the day's events.

Pictured: (top) Belong Macclesfield experience coordinator, Charlotte Parton.



Bespoke prayer book

A bespoke Siddur (prayer book) designed to meet the needs of older Jewish people residing at **Belong Morris Feinmann** has been unveiled at a special Sabbath service, marking the culmination of years of collaboration between the Didsbury village's chaplain and community volunteers.

The new version distils hundreds of pages of a traditional prayer book into a focused, large print version, making it easier for Belong's customers, including those living with dementia, to follow and take part in the monthly services. Countless hours of meticulous translation, transliteration and proof reading has brought the prayer book to fruition, thanks to generous support of Belong Morris Feinmann chaplain, Rabbi Perez, and community volunteers, Alex Crawford and Elaine Newman.

The project was the brainchild of Helen Lister, Trustee of The Feinmann Trust, which works closely with the Belong village to provide a Jewish cultural and religious input.

1: (left to right) Joint Chair of Trustees, Viv Alexander and Alan Hyams; Volunteers and co-producers of the prayer book, Elaine Newman and Alex Crawford; Trustee and co-producer of the prayer book, Helen Lister. 2: Belong Morris Feinmann prayer book' to read 'Belong Morris Feinmann customer, Sonia Peters and religious and cultural coordinator, Angela Luckett with the prayer book.



Queen's Baton Relay visits Newcastle-under-Lyme

July 18th marked the beginning of the two-day North Staffordshire tour of The Queen's Baton Relay, and Newcastle-under-Lyme welcomed the baton by fusing history and modern-day community spirit in the lead-up to the Birmingham 2022

Commonwealth Games, which started on the 28th July.

Belong co-founder, Tracy Paine, who was awarded an MBE for services to dementia care earlier this year, carried the baton through the Belong Heritage Gallery.

Batonbearer, Tracy Paine MBE, from Sandbach, said: "I'm honoured to have carried the baton as part of the Queen's Baton Relay. It's especially meaningful that it was carried through the care village, a place that means so much to me, Belong colleagues, customers and the community. Seeing everyone come out today and share in the celebration was spectacular and it really paid tribute to what the event is about."

Pictured: Batonbearer, Tracy Paine MBE at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme.



Sporting spirit continues

As Birmingham bid farewell to the Commonwealth Games, **Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme** customers continued its legacy with their own sports day inspired by the Queen's Baton Relay.

Residents competed in a number of events including ribbon gymnastics, show jumping and netball, all tailored to their various interests and abilities.

Pictured: Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme customers, Sylvia, Alan, Margaret and Beryl, enjoy their sports day



Across the Generations

Belong Crewe's new 'Across the Generations' playgroup session launched at the village at the start of October. The village have partnered with friends from St Andrew's Church in Crewe, to offer the free sessions for the local community. Family and friends have kindly donated lots of toys.

During the first session, the group enjoyed creating hand-printed flowers to celebrate National Day of Arts in Care Homes. They also enjoyed an interactive story-telling session from the book 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', as well as bubbles, music, singing and snacks!

Pictured: Customers and visitors in the village venue.



100th Birthday Celebrations

Everyone at **Belong Wigan** would like to wish resident Lily Houghton a Happy 100th Birthday and would also like to thank the local community for sending in cards for Lily in response to a community callout on social media last month to share birthday wishes.

A total of 248 cards were sent in for Lily's big day, including a card from a lady with the same name living in Utah, USA; another from her nephew she hasn't seen for 50 years; and of course, one from Her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Speaking of her centenary, Lily said: "Gosh, I hadn't realised – I thought I was just a little over 21!" and speaking of her cards: "Thank you all so much, God bless you all."

Pictured: Lily celebrated with her family.



Dementia care at its best

As dementia specialists, Belong villages and services are designed to maximise wellbeing, independence and quality of life for people living with dementia.

At Belong, we see the person, not the dementia, and tailor our support to respond to individual needs.



Small households for 24-hour support ensure a homely environment



Specialist training means colleagues are alert to customers' changing needs



Belong Companions work in partnership with customers and their families



Relative's Gateway and use of various technology to support families



Active and independent lifestyles are promoted within a vibrant community



Robust infection prevention and control measures in place

Please get in touch for further information.

☎ **0800 0322266**

✉ enquiries@belong.org.uk

🌐 www.belong.org.uk



Belong 

Your life, your pace, your way.

Locations: Atherton | Chester | Crewe | Didsbury | Macclesfield | Newcastle-under-Lyme
Warrington | Wigan

Dementia expertise | 24-hour support | Residential care | Nursing care | Short stays | Apartments