

Meet Tanya – Lifeways’ first ever Chairperson of new Family Advisory Panel

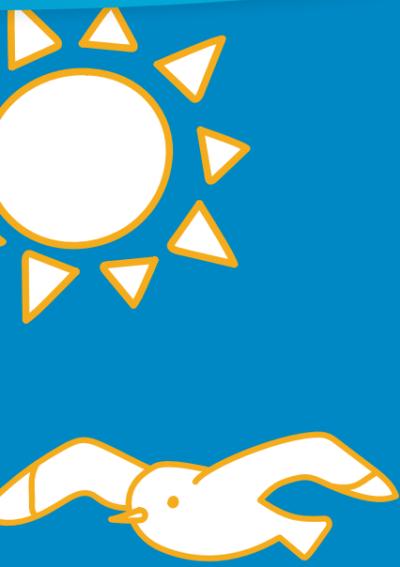
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With longer days and warmer weather, summer is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors, go on holiday or simply recharge. Whatever you're doing we hope you find some time to relax and enjoy the sunshine!

As always, Lifelines offers us an opportunity to shine a light on the work we do for the amazing people we support, and their families, and we hope you enjoy this latest edition.



Lifeways' experts champion co-production at national ARC England event

by Gareth Roberts, Quality Director

ARC England is a leading membership body representing providers of services for people with learning disabilities and autism. It exists to improve lives by supporting everyone involved in planning or delivering care and support. Lifeways has been a member since 2003.

At a recent national event hosted by ARC England, I was incredibly proud to see Lifeways' Quality Checkers showcasing co-production at its very best! Our Quality Checkers are the people we support who take on an active role in improving the quality of our services. The event brought together organisations from across the sector, along with people they support, to explore how co-production can grow and improve even more.

We have a continued commitment to co-production, where the people we support work alongside us to shape and improve our services. This was recognised and celebrated at the event and our brilliant Quality Checkers shared a powerful video showing how they identified issues, suggested solutions and helped deliver meaningful change at Lifeways.



It was so exciting to see them present and share their co-production journey and the positive improvements they've made. We now have over 200 Quality Checkers and they are incredible ambassadors for our organisation.

One innovative idea discussed was cross-organisation quality checking, where people supported by one provider assess and help improve services at another. It's a really exciting concept and that kind of collaboration could raise the bar for co-production sector-wide and is something that we are keen to champion!

Jessie, one of our Quality Checker's and a member of the Lifeways Executive Advisory Panel (LEAP), said:

I was very nervous to be presenting at ARC England, but I feel proud that I was able to provide information to other organisations. I think it's a good idea helping others learn and grow. Because I am so passionate about it, I enjoy being a driving force behind it. I feel like we have really good quality checkers who can help others.

The people we support are amazing and their involvement in reviewing what we do, how we do it, and helping shape improvements is invaluable to Lifeways.

Victoria Buyer, ARC England Policy Lead, said: "We were delighted to welcome the Lifeways Quality Checkers to our Making Co-Production Real Network. Their lived experience and commitment to quality is helping to make co-production not just an idea, but a reality in people's everyday lives."

We're excited to be part of this important national conversation and even prouder of the people we support, who are helping shape the future of care both within Lifeways and across the wider sector.



Pictured above: Jessie, a Lifeways Executive Advisory Panel (LEAP) member

Meet Tanya – Lifeways’ first ever Chairperson of new Family Advisory Panel

by Andrea Kinkade,
Chief Executive Officer

We’re proud to announce that Tanya Farley, has been appointed as the first ever Chairperson of Lifeways’ newly formed Family Advisory Panel.

Tanya, a very determined mum-of-four with a passion for making a difference, was chosen by fellow panel members to lead the group. As the mother of James, who receives supported living care from Lifeways in Stockport, she brings years of lived experience to her new role.

The independent panel was set up, following the success of our Quality Checkers initiative. Its aim is to further shape and strengthen the quality of care and support across Lifeways’ services, giving a stronger voice to families whose loved ones receive support.

Tanya got involved with the panel after reaching out to me directly and we were able to have an honest conversation about her son’s story and her hopes for improving supported living. She felt it was time to step up and use her experiences to drive change.

As Tanya herself explained:

I’m passionate about sharing what I’ve learned, making sure families are heard, and keeping standards high across services. It’s about identifying best practice and sharing it.

Bringing deep insight from lived experience

Having spent years navigating the health and care systems, Tanya has a deep understanding of the challenges faced by families like hers. She is also the organiser of Autism: A Hands-On Approach conference, which has been running for more than 20 years. More recently, she has delivered online workshops designed to create a safe space to open up conversations around key topics. You can find out more at www.autismahandsonapproach.co.uk.



The title of “Chair” came as a surprise to Tanya, but her deep understanding and determination to create positive change made her a natural choice to lead the panel. Tanya recognises that families have valuable knowledge which can be used to benefit not only their own loved ones, but other families and Lifeways’ team members too. She is determined to create a culture where people feel empowered to speak up when something isn’t working to make things better for everyone.

A key focus for the panel will be promoting open communication, peer-to-peer auditing, and encouraging continuous improvement in care. Tanya would love to see families visit and give feedback on other services, as well as their own, offering a shared perspective that could raise standards.

Personally, I’m thrilled to be working with Tanya and the Family Advisory Panel. Their insights are essential, not just for improving the quality of care, but for supporting our teams and shaping the future of Lifeways.

A stronger voice

The Panel is one way that families can help drive meaningful positive change and have a stronger voice at every level of our organisation. It will provide honest feedback on what Lifeways is doing well, where improvements can be made, and how we can build stronger relationships with families.

Our long-term goal is to set up similar panels in every region of the UK, creating a national network of engaged families. Members of our Executive Leadership Team will attend each panel, to listen, learn, and be held accountable. The Lifeways’ Board will also hear the feedback, truly linking the family experience to the governance of our organisation.

How Jess is helping to define her own support

by Sophie Sayer,
Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner

Jess was the first resident to move into our brand new supported living service in South Tyneside and she isn’t just settling in - she’s helping to shape how the service runs!

Her new home is one of two supported living services, developed in partnership with South Tyneside council and Karbon Homes. Designed for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs, they provide the right environment for people to live more independently with the right care and support close at hand.

Even before she moved in, Jess, who is 22, made it clear that she had a vision for what she wanted her support to look like. She asked if she could design her own support plan and deliver training to the team who would be supporting her. We loved the idea and as a social care provider that puts co-production at the heart of its work, we were more than happy to say “yes”.

The sessions cover everything from Jess’ autism diagnosis and sensory needs to crisis support strategies and how to build trusted relationships. During the session Jess had the entire room engaged and it was genuinely moving and inspirational to see someone so young take such ownership over their care in this way.



Jess has experienced several care placements throughout her life, and she explained how they had not always met her needs. Often support plans were written for her rather than with her and whilst they were created with the best intentions, they did not include everything that made Jess who she is.

They worked with the information they had – but it wasn’t all of me. I now understand what person-centred care really means, and how it allows individuals not only to access meaningful support but to live fulfilling lives. That’s what I wanted for myself.

Since moving into her new home, Jess has been actively involved in every support planning meeting and continues to guide the development of her care. She’s helping us grow as professionals, just as we’re here to support her to thrive. Supporting Jess has been a privilege, and it is wonderful to see co-production truly come to life in this way. It was so rewarding to hear her say in her own words:

Since moving into Lifeways, I’ve felt a sense of relief – I can finally breathe again. My new home is everything I could wish for. I’m in my own place with my own space, surrounded by people that care.

It’s the best thing that’s happened in terms of me leading a fulfilling life. For the first time in a long time, I can officially say I’m happy in my home.

Talk Time Club helps to create new guide to tackle social isolation

by Jodie Allen-Cawley, Head of Quality

“How can I make new friends in a safe and inclusive way?” This important question was raised at a recent Talk Time Club session - a relaxed space where the people we support chat directly with leaders at Lifeways.

I'm delighted to say that this powerful question has now sparked something great! Together we've created a brand new guide, full of ideas and suggestions to help people build meaningful connections and tackle social isolation.

The guide is packed with tips, advice and resources, and also showcases opportunities on how to get involved, join in, be part of a team and even support others through initiatives such as the Lifeways Executive Advisory Panel (LEAP).



Gareth Roberts, Quality Director at Lifeways shared:

Staying socially active can have a huge impact on wellbeing, and we understand how important it is for the people we support to have friends with shared interests and experiences.

Our new guide has got lots of ways for the people we support to be able reach out to others, join clubs, volunteer and more. I was really impressed with the ideas that were discussed in Talk Time Club and I'm sure the guide will be a big help for anyone looking to expand their social circle.

This new guide is another great example of how Lifeways works with the people we support to co-produce resources to help people live independent, fulfilling lives. To see a copy of the guide please visit our website and search for "Talk Time Club".



Helping Makye's skydiving dream come true!

by Kylie Crompton, Team Leader

Hold on to your hats because we have a true daredevil at one of our supported living services! Makye, has completed a skydive and fulfilled a long-held dream. I was delighted to be able to support him to do the jump in March 2025 after surprising him with the gift of a lifetime for his birthday.

This all came about after we'd achieved Makye's first goal of joining the gym. I asked him what else he wanted to do and he said he would love to jump out of a plane! Makye and I have a bond where we like to joke around a lot, so I asked a colleague to question him about it to make sure he was serious. When they confirmed Makye's dream, I went ahead and booked it all for him and surprised him on his birthday. I think I was more nervous than he was on the day!

The skydive was the latest step on Makye's support journey, having also recently joined a gym and enrolled on a performing arts course. He's come so far since we've been working together. Initially he



struggled for confidence, and we've worked really hard to encourage him out of his shell - now, he's smashing life!

Makye, who is 20, is also making progress in other areas of his life. As part of his performing arts course he rehearsed and performed a song - and it was incredible. I had tears in my eyes watching him. No one would believe he's the same person who first came to us. Makye really thrives on the unique environment of performing arts and shared with me:

I get a bit anxious, especially when I'm sitting down and have to stay still. So, I enjoy an environment where I get to move around and express myself.

To keep the adrenaline flowing, Makye has already set his next goal. He recently announced:

I want to do a bungee jump! The fear is what I find interesting. I've found that talking to your support workers, giving them a chance to help, you can achieve your goals.

We are all so proud of Makye's new confidence and adventurous spirit and can't wait to see where it takes him next!

First winners of 30 Wishes initiative revealed

by Lynne Goodall,
Quality Personalisation Officer

I am delighted to be able to share the first winners of our “30 Wishes” initiative!

The idea behind 30 Wishes is simple – to help dreams come true for the people we support. Launched as part of our 30th anniversary celebrations, we invited team members to nominate people they support who could do with an extra boost from a dream day out, an unforgettable experience or a spectacular sports or music event. Nominations are then reviewed and judged by members of the Lifeways Executive Advisory Panel (LEAP), made up of people we support.

Our very first winner is Scottie, who lives in Herefordshire. His wish was to see one of his favourite bands, Saxon, perform live. Scottie says that music is his solace, his happy place which brings him calm and peace. His nomination explained how: “playing the guitar is more than just a hobby; it is a lifeline, a form of expression, and a vital anchor in his daily life.”



**Pictured above:
Scottie with his support worker Amber**



Scottie shared:

I really can't believe I won against so many other people! I wasn't expecting to stand out at all. I'm really thankful to everyone who voted for me and thankful for the opportunity, I can't wait to watch Saxon perform in November. Thank you so much!

Our second wish was a little different but just as fulfilling. One of our supported living services in Staffordshire requested help towards revamping their large communal garden shed. The residents love to put on performances around Christmas and Halloween time, but the shed, lovingly called “the theatre of dreams”, is rundown and isn't weather-proofed so they can't rehearse in the winter. The funds we're donating will help create a proper space for performances throughout the year, which will be fantastic!

Lynne Rowley, the service's manager, told us:

All of the team members and the 18 people we support are thrilled that our nomination was chosen. Thank you, Lifeways, for kick starting this project.

The nominations are now coming in thick and fast and it is an absolute privilege for us to be able to help make wishes come true for the amazing people we support, to mark our 30th anniversary. This initiative is all about making sure we provide the best possible opportunities for people we support to live lives which are as fulfilled and independent as possible. I'm proud that we are in a position to do just that.

Julie O'Donovan Highly Commended at Housing with Care Awards 2025

by Brooke Gossling, Service Manager

I am proud to share that Julie O'Donovan, our dedicated Specialist Support Practitioner, was awarded “Highly Commended” in the Workforce Development category at the Housing with Care Awards 2025!

Lifeways was shortlisted in five categories and on the night, Julie stood out among a strong group of nominees in her category. The Workforce Development Award recognises outstanding professionals who go above and beyond to nurture talent, share expertise, and foster continuous learning.



Julie is a very passionate leader who plays a key role in helping shape the high level of support we provide at Lifeways. Her passionate dedication to creating personalised Positive Behaviour Support training has made a lasting difference not only to the lives of the people we support but to her colleagues too.

These prestigious awards, run by Care Talk, are among the UK's leading celebrations of excellence in supported living, extra care housing, learning disability services, and mental health support.



Talking about Julie's nomination, the judges said:

Julie is a passionate and dedicated specialist whose personalised training and mentoring improve outcomes for both staff and those they support. Her innovative, adaptable approach and commitment to best practice make her an invaluable part of the team, driving continuous improvement in person-centred care.

Andrea Kinkade, Lifeways' CEO, was delighted to hear of Julie's success and added:

Congratulations to Julie for being recognised nationally for the skill, heart, and dedication she brings to workforce development at Lifeways every single day.

We couldn't be prouder of Julie and her achievement shows that Lifeways is not only supporting people in our care, but also the professionals who help shape the future of that care.

Celebrating Care Home Open Week across Lifeways

by Karen Jones, Managing Director, Residential

Services across Lifeways opened their doors to celebrate Care Home Open Week in June and hosted a series of fun-filled days packed with music, games, food and celebration.

At **Guildford Road**, the team marked the week in style – also celebrating the completion of their renovations and Lifeways' 30th birthday!

At **Unity House**, guests enjoyed live music, bubbles, and celebrating both their achievements and those of several team members who were recognised with long service awards, some over 20 years!

Duke's House celebrated with a carnival themed event and a great day was had by all, including some visiting animals. Everyone got involved and family members discussed ideas for getting more people involved as Quality Checkers – watch this space!

Meanwhile, **Whitwood Hall** wowed with another carnival-themed event full of dancing, party games, and brilliant teamwork – truly living the spirit of “open doors and open hearts.”

A huge thank you to all the teams for making these events such joyful and inclusive celebrations for everyone involved, family members, professionals and those just visiting on the day – it was really something special!



Trevor's transformation: building a home, skills, and a voice with Lifeways

by Melonie Duffin, Registered Manager

When 18-year-old Trevor moved into his new Lifeways apartment in Trafford, I knew it marked the beginning of something special for him. Trevor had spent some time in temporary accommodation in Denton, arranged by the local authority, but had felt unable to settle. The move to a Lifeways supported living service offered Trevor the stability and sense of belonging that he hadn't experienced before.

Trevor now has a network of support around him, which he is not used to, but he is embracing the opportunity to find his own way. The service is designed specifically to help young people live as independently as possible and, with support to help shape and build new skills, Trevor is really starting to thrive.

From transience to tenancy: creating a home

Initially, Trevor found the transition challenging, as he has never really stayed anywhere long enough to call it “home”. When he first moved in, he turned up with everything he owned in a few bags. He had always been on the move and his reluctance to invest in his living space was something we talked about. I wanted him to feel the security and stability that a Lifeways supported living service could provide.



With ongoing support, Trevor began to embrace the idea of making a home. With guidance, he took on practical tasks such as building furniture and added personal touches with the addition of artwork and inspirational quotes.

Trevor has started getting to know his neighbours and has already found someone his own age who shares his love of comedy and performance.

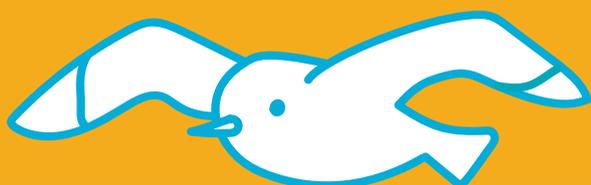
Cultivating skills, celebrating talents

Part of our role is to support people to build up their independence by helping them develop practical skills and Trevor is doing just that – he is learning to cook and do woodworking while also exploring his creative talents. As he told me “I can act, rap, sing, dance, you name it.”

Currently he is honing his stand-up comedy skills and hopes to record in a music studio. We are also helping him explore further opportunities, such as college courses. Sharing his hopes for the future, Trevor said:

My talents could go somewhere. Eventually I'd really like a family and a job - but I also know this may take time.

What I am most proud of is the way Trevor is finding his voice - he is now involved in creating a newsletter and is set to join Lifeways' Quality Checkers team – people we support who help to evaluate and shape the support we provide. Trevor has come a long way in such a short time, turning his apartment into a home, learning new skills, building his confidence and now sharing his voice, not just for himself but for others as well.



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