

ISSUE 12 | SUMMER 2025

# lifewayslinks

## The Lifeways newsletter for the **South East** region

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Interactive PDF



Welcome to the  
**Summer Edition of  
Lifeways Links!**



## Hello, I am Bridget Sitters, local Lifeways Business Development and Relationship Manager for the South East.

I'm currently working with developers and housing associations on new opportunities in the South East. If you would like to discuss current gaps in provision and how Lifeways can help you meet these needs, then please contact me on **[bridget.sitters@lifeways.co.uk](mailto:bridget.sitters@lifeways.co.uk)**.

I hope you enjoy our Summer issue of Lifeways Links where we take the opportunity to look at some of the exciting developments taking place across Lifeways and celebrate some of the great achievements of the people we support in your region.



## How we can support

Lifeways supports adults living with learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental health needs to lead more fulfilling and independent lives in their local communities.

Our experienced assessment team - now joined by some new colleagues - are always available to work together with you, from arranging introductions, assessments and visits, all the way through to the move being complete and the kettle going on.

## Get in touch today

If you'd like to make a referral, you can do so by clicking on any of the services in this newsletter, or call us on:

**0333 321 4881**

Email us at:

**[referrals@lifeways.co.uk](mailto:referrals@lifeways.co.uk)**



**Gemma Gwynn-May**  
Referral Assessment  
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Practitioner







## *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](http://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.





# 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 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”.

# Celebrating Care Home Open Week at Guildford Road

by Amanda Brooke, Chief Transformation Officer

**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.**

I was delighted to join the team at **Guildford Road** in Woking, who chose to mark the week in style, celebrating not only Care Home Open Week but also the completion of recent renovations to the service and Lifeways’ 30th birthday. There were games, music, great food and very warm welcome.

The event truly captured our CHOICE values with our ‘One Team’ value very much in evidence with lots of people coming together to make the event a success.

## Elsewhere...

- 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!*





# Barleyfest brings music, food and fun to Long Melford for its sixth year!

by Angela Dodds, Registered Manager

**We were delighted to transform Barleycombe into the “Barleyfest” festival venue on Saturday 26th July. The team at Barleycombe, a residential care service in Long Melford, Suffolk, spared no effort in turning the garden into an inclusive, vibrant festival - filled with music, food and community spirit. We welcomed dozens of families who enjoyed great entertainment, delicious food and lovely homemade crafts at the festival, which is now in its sixth year!**

This year's highlights included performances by the Phoenix Marching Band and the Ultimate 80s Tribute Band, alongside BBQ food, an ice cream van, a bouncy castle for children, and stalls selling everything from skincare products to homemade crafts. Lifeways senior leaders also kindly donated vouchers to be used as raffle prizes during the event.

It's amazing to see how far Barleyfest has come from its humble beginnings in 2019 when just a few families and friends joined us. Each year it has got bigger and better! We now have people attending from the local community, new stalls, live bands - and everyone has a simply wonderful time!

Barleyfest is subsidised by our own social fund, and thanks to the fantastic support we receive, we have been able to bring it back every year. This year we were also awarded £500 as part of Lifeways'



30 Wishes campaign, celebrating the company's 30th anniversary. Part of the funding will go towards repairing our summer house, previously used by our residents for movie nights but sadly damaged in recent storms.

Karen Jones, Managing Director of Residential Services at Lifeways, who attended the event said:

***It was an absolute pleasure to award Barleycombe the £500 needed to help repair its summer house. I'd like to thank the team at Barleycombe, as well as the people who live there who co-produced the event, for putting on such a wonderful community day supported by people in and around Long Melford. Barleyfest 2025 was a smash hit, and we're really excited to do the whole thing again next year.***





## Sharing my journey for Pride Month

by Clare, a person we support

**Hello everyone, I want to share with you how I celebrated Pride Month and what it means to me.**

**My name is Clare, and I have a brother named Daniel. We both came out as gay and lesbian when we were teenagers, and our journey has been one of love, acceptance and pride.**

**Our mum has always been overprotective, but she is also incredibly proud of us. She has never been ashamed to show her support and love for her children, and that makes all the difference.**

Throughout my life, I've learned that people need to respect our wishes and understand that being gay or lesbian is just a part of who we are. We are still the same human beings, deserving of love, respect, and kindness. Pride Month is a time to celebrate our identities, to be visible, and to remind everyone that everyone deserves acceptance.



This Pride Month, my brother attended Pride events in Southampton and Brighton, and I am so proud of him for standing tall and celebrating openly. As for me, I feel grateful to live in a place where I receive full support from my support team and my neighbours in Filbert Close. As a person I try to be welcoming and understanding, and I am proud to be open about my identity.

***Pride Month is not just about celebrating who we are; it's about raising awareness, fighting for equality, and fostering a world where everyone can be themselves without fear or shame. I encourage everyone to embrace love, respect, and kindness - values that bring us together.***

Keep celebrating Pride! Let's continue to celebrate diversity and spread love everywhere. Clare.

## Adam takes great strides after moving into Pear Tree Court

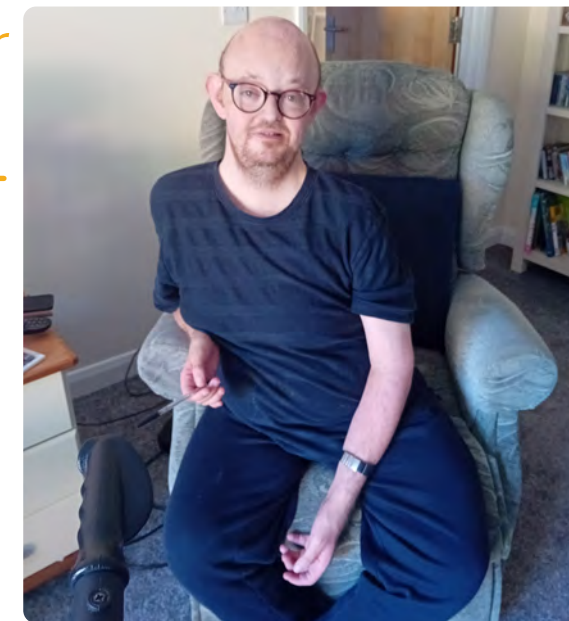
by Emma Thomas, Service Manager

**Adam, who is 29, moved into Pear Tree Court two years ago after living with his mum and dad all his life. After his mum sadly passed away, his family reached out to social services for help when Adam expressed a wish to live more independently.**

One of the challenges Adam faced is that he has Kabuki syndrome – a genetic disorder which affects his organs. Alongside this Adam was living with obesity, diabetes, hypermobility, and digestive issues all of which required dedicated support to manage effectively.

Since moving into supported living and with the team's encouragement and care, Adam has lost 4 ½ stone in around 12 months – an incredible achievement! This has helped enormously with many of his health problems - his diabetic medication has been reduced, his mobility has improved and his knees dislocate much less often.

To help Adam lose weight, we offered advice on his portion control, helping him to understand healthy portion sizes and the best kind of foods to eat to suit his needs.



We also used easy read documents to help with meal planning and choosing foods for his diabetes as well as to explore new foods - something he is enjoying immensely!

***With his new found energy and enthusiasm, Adam started walking more each day, took on household tasks, joined a bowls club, went to discos and became more active generally. His confidence has grown and he now enjoys socialising with other residents and the team.***

We are all so proud of Adam and continue to celebrate and encourage his successes. He made the right decision to increase his independence and is showing every day just what he can achieve!



# Lifeways celebrates success at the Care Home Awards 2025

by Karen Jones, Managing Director, Residential

**On Friday 16 May, at the prestigious Care Home Awards in London, Lifeways proudly walked away with the Best Use of Care Management Software award plus three highly commended trophies!**

The Care Home Awards are an annual event in the UK that recognise and celebrate excellence, innovation, and achievement within the care home sector. We were delighted to be recognised for the way in which we transformed our approach to care by introducing Nourish, a digital care management system, which enables us to record, plan and coordinate care in real time, and Deputy, a digital rostering system, which give our teams control over their own work patterns.

*Lifeways was also highly commended in three categories*

- *Best for nursing care*
- *Best facilities management*
- *Best for specialist care*



I am so proud that all our teams' hard work, passion and commitment to delivering excellent support has been recognised at the Care Home Awards.

We're especially delighted to have won the **Best Use of Care Management Software** award after we introduced Nourish and Deputy to our business in early 2024. In just over a year, and after a monumental 'one team' effort, we have rolled these game-changing pieces of software out to our incredible frontline teams. The results have been amazing and it is all thanks to our teams who have embraced the change and helped us transform how we manage our support.

This is the first time we've entered the Care Home Awards, so to come away with a win and highly commended in three categories is an exceptional reflection on the extraordinary people who make Lifeways what it is.



## "An incredible turnaround" - Larchwood House rated 'Good' by CQC

by Sarah Morgan, Registered Manager

**We are proud and excited to share that Larchwood House in Bedford has been rated 'Good', in all areas, by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It's an incredible reflection of the dedication and combined efforts of every member of the team.**

Larchwood House supports up to eight autistic people and people with learning disabilities. The CQC carried out its inspection between 29 April and 9 May 2025 following on from the previous 'Requires Improvement' rating. Thanks to a major improvement plan and the commitment of the whole team, the service has been transformed!

We're incredibly proud of this achievement. We strive to be Outstanding - but to go from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good' reflects the hard work, dedication, and passion of our team members in creating a safe, caring, and empowering environment for the people we support. It's been an incredible turnaround.



### *The Inspectors praised:*

- A safe and supportive environment, with trained staff who know how to report safeguarding concerns and manage risks, including those related to medication
- Effective supports for people to live healthy, independent lives, both at home and in the community
- A strong person-centred approach, with staff helping individuals make choices, pursue personal goals, and engage in activities that reflect their interests and preferences
- Clear and detailed care plans
- A positive culture with effective leadership and a motivated staff team

The inspectors noted that the people living at the service were relaxed and happy. One of the people we support told the inspectors, "I love being here. All the staff are my favourites, and I can be myself and do whatever I want." This feedback is music to our ears and exactly what we had been striving for. A family member added "The main things I think about are the quality of the care and how [family members] feel. The staff team make sure these two things are both brilliant."

Karen Jones, Managing Director of Lifeways' Residential division, said: "I'm so proud of the team for the huge amount of effort, commitment and dedication they've shown in turning the service around. This report is a delight to read and truly reflects the incredible work our teams do to ensure the people we support experience the best possible care and support."

I'm so proud to be part of this amazing team and our continuing journey to providing the best possible care and support.



## Current vacancies in the South East

[Read more](#)

Supported living for 4 people

### The Green

Stotfield, Hertfordshire

#### Shared house

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Acquired brain injuries
- ✓ Mental health
- ✓ Easy access to A1

The Green, a modern, four-bedroom semi-detached house in Stotfield, Hertfordshire, provides tailored support to people living with learning disabilities, brain injuries, physical disabilities, autism or mental health conditions. The bedrooms share a bathroom, a large kitchen, living room and dining room. The property also has a separate laundry room and an accessible garden with a patio area for everyone to enjoy.

The people we support here have a range of hobbies and activities including walking, swimming, shopping and day trips out - everyone is encouraged to pursue their own interests and make the most out of the local community.

The Green is located in the small town of Stotfield, a quiet residential area not far from Hitchin with convenience stores, restaurants, pubs and cafes. We are close to the A1 with excellent access to the wider local area and London. There are bus services into Hitchin, Stevenage and Baldock and the local station has train services to Peterborough, Horsham and on to London.

[Read more](#)

Supported living for 13 people

### Mayfair Court

Raunds, Northamptonshire

#### Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Physical disabilities

Mayfair Court has 13 apartments providing accommodation and 24-hour support tailored to each person's specific needs. Each apartment has a kitchen, a living room, and a bathroom. Three apartments have one bedroom while the remaining ten have two bedrooms.

Mayfair Court is ideal for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health conditions and autism. The people we support are aged between 24 and 65 and live with a range of needs – some people are highly dependent on team members while others have a good level of independence. Small pets are welcomed – one person has a pet guinea pig.

Mayfair Court is in Raunds, which has pubs, restaurants, newsagents, supermarkets, a library, a post office, GP surgery and NHS Dentist. Locally there is a leisure centre, parks, a nature reserve, museums, Rushden Lakes Shopping centre with a cinema, restaurants and shops, the theatre and art galleries.

Raunds is thirty minutes from Northampton and with great transport links, including local train and bus routes, it's easy to get out and explore.

[Read more](#)

Supported living for 15 people

### Claridge Court

Rushden, Northamptonshire

#### Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Accessible garden

Claridge Court has sixteen spacious self-contained one-bedroom apartments, each with an open-plan kitchen and living room, and a wet room style bathroom.

Providing 24-hour tailored support, Claridge Court is ideal for people aged between 23 and 65 who live with complex needs. The people who live here enjoy a variety of hobbies and interests with quiz nights, group meals out and trips to the coast and Cadbury World being particular favourites.

Located in Rushden, Claridge Court is surrounded by vibrant cafés, pubs, restaurants, high street shops, supermarkets, banks, a library, NHS Dentist and GP surgery and a post office. Locally there is a leisure centre, local parks, a nature reserve, Rushden Lakes Shopping with a cinema, restaurants and shops, museums, the theatre and art galleries.

Rushden has great transport links and regular bus services to Kettering, Wellingborough and Northampton. The nearby train station has services to Nottingham, Sheffield, Derby, Bedford and London.



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