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As the festive season approaches, all of us at Lifeways would like to send you and your loved ones our best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. For those not celebrating Christmas, may we wish you a restful holiday period.

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!

Hundreds celebrate as Lifeways marks 30th birthday throughout the UK

by Andrea Kinkade,
Chief Executive Officer

Recently I've had the absolute pleasure of seeing hundreds of our team members and the people we support coming together to celebrate Lifeways' 30th anniversary.

Throughout August, services across the UK hosted an incredible variety of events – from garden parties and BBQs to themed celebrations and community outings. Each one was unique, but they all had something in common: a deep sense of connection, joy, and pride in the community that we've built together over the past three decades.

These parties were more than just marking a milestone – they were a celebration of the relationships, achievements and sense of community that are at the heart of everything we do.

The laughter, the stories shared, and the genuine love and joy we saw across the country perfectly captured what Lifeways is all about. It's these connections and celebrations that make the biggest difference to people's lives and illustrate the impact we've been able to have.

One of the things that made these events so meaningful was how they were created. Many of the celebrations were co-designed by our support teams and the people they work alongside – a true reflection of the co-production values we champion through our Lifeways Executive Advisory Panel (LEAP). It was inspiring to see everyone's creativity shine through, and even more inspiring to see how much happiness it brought to everyone involved.

This year, we've been celebrating in lots of different ways – from our staff awards to our 30 Wishes initiative, where we're helping to make dreams come true for the people we support. It's been a year of reflection, gratitude, and looking ahead with excitement.



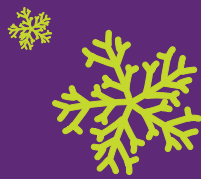
When I think back to where we started in 1995, it's incredible to see how far we've come. From our beginnings supporting people with learning disabilities, we've grown into the UK's largest team of professionals supporting people with complex needs in the community. That growth has only been possible because of the passion, dedication, and heart of our people.

As we look to the future, I'm filled with optimism. The last 30 years have shown us what's possible when we work together with compassion and purpose for the benefit of the people we support. And if the celebrations this year are anything to go by, the next 30 years are going to be just as rewarding.

Thank you to everyone who made our anniversary so memorable – here's to continuing our journey, together.



Groundbreaking partnership sets new standard for care training



by Karen Jones,
Managing Director, Residential

I'm proud to share how a pioneering partnership at Abbeymoor has been hailed as a blueprint for how social and health care can work together to improve lives.

Abbeymoor, a residential Neurological Care Centre in Newcastle, supports up to 40 adults with acquired brain injuries and neurological conditions. Earlier this year we partnered with Northumbria University and the Community Acquired Brain Injury Service (CABIS) to embed two final-year occupational therapy students directly into the service.

Typically, university placements tend to be quite short, so we created a hands-on placement that allowed the students to become part of the team at Abbeymoor. This immersive approach allowed them to work alongside team members every day giving them time to fully understand each person's individual needs.

The two students, Chloe Stockdale and Elicia Bordoley, made a real difference during their time with us, introducing changes like personalised room layouts, communication boards, and tailored group activities. They also supported our team by delivering training on the effects of brain injury and how to better support residents in their daily routines.

As Louise Watson, our Registered Manager at Abbeymoor, said:

"This placement wasn't just about learning – it made a real difference to our residents. The students brought fresh ideas and helped us strengthen our focus on person-centred care. Services like ours have proven they can be dynamic learning environments for future healthcare



professionals and we're so proud to be leading the way in creating these opportunities."

Chloe, who has since qualified as an Occupational Therapist, reflected on her experience: "It's been a privilege. I feel lucky to have had this opportunity."

CABIS is now holding up this initiative as a model for integrated, proactive care – and I couldn't agree more. We're proud to be part of a ground-breaking collaboration that's making a difference to the people we support. Driving change and innovation in the sector has long been part of Lifeways' DNA, and this latest partnership continues that tradition.

Not only are we helping to equip future professionals with invaluable experience and expertise, but we're doing it while also improving outcomes for the people in our services. To help future placements thrive, our team has developed a full induction plan, including training, mentoring, and resources to help students settle in and understand their role. Now that Chloe and Elicia have qualified, they're supporting the next group of students – continuing the cycle of learning and improvement.

As Lisa Pullen, Occupational Therapist at CABIS, summed it up: "This approach shows what's possible when care homes and health services work together. It's a win-win for residents, staff and students."

My podcast journey: Promoting inclusivity!

by Jessie, a person we support

Hi, I'm Jessie, and I live at a supported living service in Stourport. I'm an aspiring presenter, and I'm really excited to be launching my own podcast called **Let's Collaborate!**

I've always been passionate about making sure people with learning disabilities are heard, included and empowered. That's why I created Let's Collaborate, a podcast where we talk about things that really matter.

After months of planning, recording, and practicing, I released the very first episode at the end of September and I couldn't be prouder! I was joined by Lynne Goodall, Lifeways' Quality Personalisation Officer, and we had a great conversation about voting, personal development, and how we can all help drive positive change.

One of the things we talked about was how confusing voting can be for people with learning disabilities. Lynne shared some great tips and stories from her own experience, and it really got me thinking about how important it is to make information accessible for everyone.

We also chatted about how Lynne keeps learning in her role, and how that helps her support people better. It was inspiring to hear how passionate she is



about making a difference and it reminded me why I started this podcast in the first place.

The response to the first episode has been amazing and since then I've been chosen to receive 30 Wishes funding from Lifeways! That means I'll be able to buy new filming equipment to improve the quality of future episodes. When I found out, I was totally shocked – in a good way! It didn't sink in at first, but now I am proud and excited to continue with my podcast and make it even better.

I've had so much support from the team at Stourside, who have been behind me every step of the way, helping me feel confident and happy with the project. I couldn't have done it without them.



 You can watch the first episode of Jessie's podcast with Lifeways' Quality Personalisation Officer, Lynne Goodall, via the Lifeways YouTube channel, under the "Channels by people we support" heading.

Reopening Trent View: Bringing new life to a much-loved home

by Andrea Ellison,
Head of Property

I'm incredibly proud to share that our property team has recently completed a major refurbishment at Trent View in Burton-on-Trent. The project has brought new life into the home, helping to create the best possible environment for the people we support.

After months of hard work, it was wonderful to officially reopen Trent View this August, following a major £750,000 refurbishment. Families and professionals joined us for a special open day to celebrate and showcase all the improvements that have been carried out. The home was officially reopened by Laura, who we support at Trent View, along with her mum. Seeing how excited Laura was to move into her brand-new room reminded me exactly why we do what we do.

All the residents played an active part in shaping their home, choosing colours and furnishings for their own rooms and shared spaces, making the refurbishment feel truly personal and meaningful.

Karen Jones, Managing Director of Lifeways' Residential Care division, summed it up perfectly:

It was a privilege to see Trent View reopen following this full refurbishment. This is exactly what Lifeways is all about - providing high-quality, person-centred care to the people we support, and that starts with the quality of our homes.



Trent View is a beautiful three-storey Victorian building and bringing it back to life has been a real labour of love for me and my team. Since work began earlier this year, we've made extensive improvements, including:

- A completely new roof
- Restoration of the original tiled entrance floor and main staircase
- Refurbishment of all eight bedrooms and top floor communal bathroom
- Installation of a brand-new sensory room
- A new medication room
- Addition of a new first floor office
- Upgrades to the lounges and dining areas



Registered Manager, Ellen Parton, added:

"Everything we hoped for has been delivered. Lifeways has invested a lot of time and resources into this building, and we now have top-quality furnishings and a beautiful, welcoming space for the people we support."

The feedback we've received means so much to me and to everyone in the Property Team. It's been a huge team effort from start to finish. Kieron Steele, Lifeways' Chief Financial Officer, agreed:

"The transformation of Trent View has been incredibly rewarding. What was once a building in real need of attention is now a beautiful, welcoming home that reflects the needs and choices of the people we support."

This project has been one of the highlights of my year. Seeing the smiles on people's faces as they walk back through the doors, into a home that's bright, safe, and full of life again, makes every moment of hard work worthwhile.



Staffordshire and Walsall services spooktacular celebrations!

by Nicola Beasley, Area Manager

This Halloween, our Staffordshire and Walsall services came together for a spooktacular celebration at Stafford Rangers Football Club. More than 50 people from 15 services attended the event, which was co-produced from start to finish by the people we support and team members. It was amazing to see how everyone worked together to plan all the details, from the venue and food to the decorations and competitions.

What made the event so special was seeing everyone come together. It was the first one of its kind in our area, and it gave services that don't often get to connect a chance to celebrate side-by-side.



One heart-warming moment that really stood out for me was seeing someone who usually doesn't take part in group events stay for the entire celebration. They had a fantastic time and it was a huge personal achievement. That's what these events are all about – creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, included and free to express themselves.

We sang, danced to spooky favourites, and even raised £50 for a local charity. It was a brilliant example of our CHOICE values in action, and I'm so happy for everyone involved. We're already looking forward to making it a regular tradition!

My long journey to success

by Leo, a person we support

Leo bravely shared her mental health journey with us, which she describes as long, difficult, but ultimately successful. Today she is thriving at Brunswick Gardens - a supported living service, where she enjoys group activities, has made new friends and has grown hugely in confidence.

Please note: The following story contains references to suicide and mental health struggles, which some readers may find distressing. If you are feeling overwhelmed or struggling with your mental health, please reach out for support - see details at the end of this article.

Where do I start? My name is Lenona, my friends call me Leo, and my story has been a long one - a difficult one, but a successful one.

When I was younger, I started hearing voices, but it wasn't too much of a concern and I brushed it off as my mind playing tricks on me. But then I started to hear negative voices and they would say things like, "You're being followed," or "You're in danger," and honestly, that did scare me. Sometimes I would think people were following me and that I was in danger. I would walk and walk and ended up in the most bizarre places and was reported as a missing person.

Eventually, it was time to get some mental health support. I think I was 16 or 17 when I had my first appointment, and that's when I first heard the term "psychosis". Unfortunately, before I got any sort of diagnosis for that, I tried to take my own life. I ended up in hospital and I was just so out of touch with reality.

Nothing made sense. I could see spiders all over the walls, I could see bugs under my skin, and these voices were just being horrible. In the end, I was sectioned. From then on, I was in and out of hospital for about three years. Then, one day, I got transferred to somewhere in Sunderland, and I was there for maybe two years. I thought I was never going to get better.



Eventually, I got diagnosed with treatment-resistant schizoaffective disorder. Then one day, I got put on a new medication and things started looking up. It didn't really get rid of the voices or hallucinations, but it made them much better.

Soon enough, I found my feet. I went into a doctor's meeting, and they went: "We think we're going to start looking for somewhere for you to live". My social worker eventually found somewhere called Brunswick Gardens and a couple of weeks later, I got visited by the Lifeways team. I had loads of questions - and quite literally every question I asked was answered the way I wanted.

It was like: "Can I decorate it my own way?" "Yes, of course you can." "Can I have pets?" "Yes, of course you can."

It was such a positive meeting and I was really glad. At first, when I moved in, I was like, "Am I going to meet new friends, or am I going to be lonely?" but over the half a year I've been here, I've made loads of friends. I'm confident, I go to support groups, I go to art groups, I go on walks with other residents, I pop in for a cup of tea or a chat. I'm just loving life at the minute, and I can't thank my family, my friends, and the staff enough for helping me out. Now, I can't wait to see what the future is like.

Samaritans: Call **116 123** (free, 24/7) or visit [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)

Shout: Text SHOUT to **85258** for free, confidential support 24/7

Mind: Visit [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk) or call **0300 123 3393**

Papyrus (for under 35s): Call **0800 068 4141** or text **07860 039967**

Ruth's weight loss journey turns her life around!

by Kaitlan Davey, Team Leader

Over the past year, I've had the absolute pleasure of supporting Ruth, a young woman from Mansfield who has completely transformed her life. Ruth lives at our Jersey Gardens supported living service, and watching her journey unfold has been one of the most rewarding parts of my role.

Ruth's decision to make a change started a few years ago. She wanted to be more active and go on walks without getting out of breath. Through healthier eating and calorie counting, she lost an incredible three stone - going from 18 to 15 stone. That was just the beginning of her journey.

Last year, Ruth decided to take things further and joined Slimming World, attending every Tuesday. I was so pleased to support her, especially since I've been through my own weight-loss journey and know how empowering it can be. We quickly bonded over shared tips and batch-cooking Slimming World meals with hot pot fast becoming a firm favourite for both of us!

Ruth's determination has been really inspiring. She has now lost another three stone, bringing her weight down to 12 stone. "I was a bit overweight, and I was really worried about my health, so I wanted to lose some weight," she told me. Since losing weight, Ruth has blossomed. She's happier, more confident, and absolutely loves shopping for new clothes.



She's embracing brighter, more colourful outfits and is truly glowing. It's been wonderful to see her transformation, not just physically, but emotionally too.

Nowadays Ruth even keeps me on track advising me on what I should and should not be eating! I love that she's taken such ownership of her journey. As a team, we've also supported her in maintaining a healthy social life, which has been just as important as the physical changes.

Ruth now enjoys a cheat meal once a week after her Tuesday weigh-ins, and it's a strategy that's working really well for her. She's recently adjusted her target to a four-stone total weight loss, and I have no doubt she'll reach it with ease.

Not only does Ruth feel fantastic, but she's noticed so many health benefits. She's out walking more often and no longer struggles for breath. She feels healthier overall and has gone from a size 22 to a size 12. As a team, we couldn't be prouder of Ruth. Her journey is a testament to what's possible with the right support, a positive mindset, and a whole lot of determination.

Festive cheer all year as Nottinghamshire service unveils Christmas-themed bedroom

by Dawn Shelton, Registered Manager

Here at Rose Meadow, our residents can now enjoy the festive season every day of the year, thanks to a £250,000 refurbishment by Lifeways.

As part of this incredible makeover, we've transformed one of our bedrooms into a dedicated Christmas-themed space, designed entirely around the interests of one of the people we support. The room features a Christmas tree, two Santas, and even a Grinch-inspired mural!

One of the things I love most about my role as Registered Manager is seeing how personalised environments can make such a difference to the people who live here. The person we support who inspired this room has a particularly strong connection to the holidays, and having a space designed just for him has helped him build trust and confidence with others.

The whole approach to this refurbishment has been led by the desire to create environments that offer privacy, dignity and reflect the interests of the people we support. Other bedrooms at Rose Meadow have also been given their own unique designs. One now features a Harry Potter mural, with 'the boy who lived' chasing a golden snitch across a Quidditch pitch, while another is being refurbished as a tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family.

I can't overstate how important it is to have a specialist refurbishment team with the knowledge and skills to work alongside people with learning disabilities and autism. Their approach has made



the whole renovation process so much smoother for everyone involved. They've really taken the time to form relationships, and I even saw one member of the property team dancing in his own time to Steps with one of the people who live here – it was magical to see.

The transformation has been warmly welcomed by everyone here at Rose Meadow. Support Worker Naomi shared that the "Christmas king" of the service is "absolutely loving his new room" and is proud to show it off. She also thanked Lifeways and the Property Team for being open to suggestions about how the rooms should be decorated, saying "Once the ideas were put forward, Lifeways was straight on it. I think it's lovely they've done this for the guys – some of them have lived here for 20 years, and I know they really appreciate it."

The refurbishment began earlier this year and is scheduled to be completed before Christmas. As part of the project, we've carefully restored the mock Tudor building, so the original ornate ceiling features have been brought back to their former glory. The first two bedrooms were prioritised, alongside the installation of a brand-new, fully fitted kitchen, modern bathrooms and en-suites as well as a fully refurbished medication room and larder.

This project has been such a rewarding journey. Seeing how the people we support respond to their new spaces – the joy, pride, and sense of belonging – reminds me every day why creating personalised environments matters so much.



Celebrating success: Lifeways shines in national awards!

by Andrea Kinkade, Chief Executive Officer

As we mark our 30th anniversary, it's been an incredible last few months for Lifeways from reaching the LaingBuisson Awards shortlist to a royal training award and our latest Great British Care Awards win – all of which are the result of a shared commitment to helping people live their best lives.

I'm absolutely delighted that our Lifeways leadership team has been shortlisted for Leadership Team of the Year at this year's LaingBuisson Awards. These awards are among the most respected in our sector, and to be recognised for our transformational leadership and commitment to continuous improvement is a huge honour.

This recognition reflects the incredible progress we've made through our organisation-wide transformation programme, driving significant improvements in quality, innovation, and workforce development, creating environments where both our teams and the people we support can grow and thrive.

Royal seal of approval for commitment to learning and development

Our commitment to learning and development has been awarded with the prestigious Princess Royal Training Award for 2025. Formally approved by HRH The Princess Royal, this honour places us among just 57 organisations across the UK to be recognised this year, alongside respected names such as John Lewis & Partners, JCB, and OVO Energy and is a remarkable achievement.



As James Westwood-Beere, Chief People Officer, said: "It's an incredible moment that showcases the strength of our culture, the passion of our teams, and the difference that outstanding learning and leadership can make across our organisation".



Regional care champion – Woodbury View!

At the Great British Care Awards – West Midlands Region, our team at Woodbury View received the Home Care Team Award and will now go through to the national final in 2026!

The judges praised the team's care as "truly exemplary," highlighting their extraordinary dedication to a person recovering from serious illness. Their family member shared, "I never worry about whether they are happy or well cared for because I know they have the best care possible," - this meant everything to us!

Nicola Driscoll, Service Manager, was extremely proud of her team and shared: "Winning this award isn't just about one moment - it represents the consistent teamwork, integrity, and heart that define Woodbury View. I couldn't be prouder of my colleagues for always going the extra mile, supporting each other, and truly living our values."

Managing Director of Lifeways' Residential Division, Karen Jones added, "Awards like this are really important for raising standards across the sector. We're thrilled to now represent the West Midlands in the national finals in February 2026, and we'll continue to show what person-centred, compassionate care really means."

As I have said before, any award recognition is ultimately a reflection of the extraordinary people who deliver quality services to the people we support every day. While I'm really proud of our success, I'm even prouder of what these awards represent - the dedication, passion and professionalism our teams show day-in, day-out to make a difference to people's lives.



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