

ISSUE 13 | WINTER 2025

lifewayslinks

The Lifeways newsletter for the **North West** region

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Interactive PDF



Welcome to the
Winter edition of
Lifeways Links!



Hello, I'm Ros Creamer and I'm your local Lifeways Business Development and Relationship Manager for the **North West**.



I'm currently working with developers and housing associations around new opportunities in the region. If you would like to discuss current gaps in provision and how Lifeways can help you meet these needs, then please contact me on ros.creamer@lifeways.co.uk.

I hope you enjoy our winter issue of LifewaysLinks 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.

Lastly, I would like to extend to 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.

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.



Kirsty Byrne
Referral Assessment
Practitioner



Monique Caton
Referral Assessment
Practitioner



Charlene Barlow
Referral Assessment
Practitioner

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



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.

Hundreds celebrate as Lifeways marks 30th birthday throughout the UK

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 groundbreaking 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."



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.

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**

Blackburn grandmother shares her journey after losing 10 years to mental illness



by Katrina Eccles, Support Worker

Since Susan moved into Balfour House, life has improved significantly for her, and now she has published a book which she hopes will support people experiencing mental ill health.

Susan's childhood was traumatic – she's spoken about being taken to view corpses in coffins as a child, and how she was admitted to a mental health ward at the turn of the Millennium. She was transferred between several hospitals as her condition worsened. At one point, she became convinced she was a "living corpse" with no feelings. "I lost my mind – my mind completely went," she told me.

There was a time when she was placed in a flat on her own after a nurse recommended she try living independently. She sat there alone for six weeks, convinced there were rats outside, not answering the door to anyone. Eventually, a friend arrived with the police and found her walking in circles, banging her head against the wall.



Things started to change when Sheila, her social worker, took over her case. They've stayed close ever since and even worked together to publish Susan's book, 'My Lost Years'. It's a powerful account of everything she's been through, and she wrote it to help others who might be struggling.

Another turning point came when her first grandchild, Emily, was born. "I actually felt something for this child, where I hadn't felt anything for anybody," she said. That moment helped her reconnect with life.

When Susan came to view her flat here at Balfour House, she saw the potential straight away. She redecorated it to her taste and she's now lived here for around 14 years. "I love it here," she says. "I decided to save up, get a new bed and white wardrobes so when I woke up everything was white."

She's always been grateful for the support she's received, and I've been proud to be part of that.

"The support is really good – you've helped me out when I struggled with the electric bill. They said I owed so much, but you sorted it all out for me, didn't you," she told me.

Now, more than a decade since being discharged from mental health services, Susan's life has changed completely. She has four grandchildren, a son she's closer to than ever, and a group of friends who once thought they'd lost her. "I've come back much better than I was. Now, I love my life."

Susan's book was her idea from the start. With Sheila's help she even tracked down her old hospital records – there were so many boxes, they couldn't help but laugh about it. But her goal was always clear: she wanted to help others.

"I'm here to tell the story, and I hope that anybody who reads this, it helps you," she says. And I think it will.



Championing acceptance and equality at Manchester Pride

by Heather Wright,
Head of Health & Safety

Over the August bank holiday weekend, I had the absolute privilege of joining thousands of people at Manchester Pride to celebrate acceptance, equality, and inclusivity. It was an unforgettable experience – and one that reminded me just how important it is to keep showing up for the people we support and the colleagues we work alongside every day.

I was there with team members from across Lifeways, including members of our Diversity Council and some of the amazing people we support. Together, we walked through Manchester's Gay Village, proudly representing Lifeways and everything we stand for.

We were also delighted to walk alongside The Outstanding Society, a brilliant platform that celebrates best practice in social care. Being part of that crowd, surrounded by colour, music, and joy, was a powerful reminder of how far we've come and how much further we can go as a society.



The atmosphere was electric. With headline performances from Eurovision star Olly Alexander and 2000s icon Nelly Furtado across the four-day festival, the city was buzzing all weekend. But for me, the real highlight was seeing our team come together in such a meaningful way.

At Lifeways, Pride isn't just a one-off event. It's part of who we are. Flying the flag for our team members and the people we support to attend events like this is a reflection of our CHOICE values – especially 'Equal'. We're committed to creating a culture where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued, every single day.

I felt incredibly honoured to represent Lifeways at Pride. It was a celebration of inclusion and our shared commitment to equality, not just during Pride season, but all year round.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the day so special. Let's keep speaking up, standing together, and celebrating the diversity that makes Lifeways such a brilliant place to be.



Craig goes the distance in memory of his best friend

by Lynne Rowley, Service Manager

Over the past few years, myself and the team at Pioneer Court in Stoke-on-Trent have been inspired by Craig, who has started running marathons in memory of his late best friend Alan.

Craig rediscovered his love for running back in 2014. It was something he enjoyed at school, and with encouragement from Alan and support from our team, he's gone from strength to strength. Since then, he's completed more than 30 marathons and he's not stopping anytime soon!



Recently, Craig finished seventh out of more than 1,600 competitors in the Potters 'Arf Marathon, completing it in a time of two hours 36 minutes and dedicating that achievement to Alan. It was such an emotional moment for all of us because we know how much this means to him.

Our role has been to make sure Craig has everything he needs to succeed – from arranging regular training sessions with his key worker to helping him get the right running gear and advice on nutrition. We've been with him every step of the way, and honestly, it's been inspiring to see his determination.

Craig often talks about Alan and how much he valued their friendship. Keeping Alan's memory close through running has given Craig a real sense of purpose. And the results speak for themselves with his most recent race being his fastest yet, finishing in just one hour and 19 minutes!

He trains twice a week with his running club, whatever the weather, and his next big goal is to take on the London Marathon! Knowing Craig, I have no doubt he'll make it happen.

Staffordshire and Walsall services join for spooktacular Halloween celebration

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!



Current vacancies in the North West



Supported Living for 16 people

Quadrant House

Warrington, Cheshire

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Mental health specialism
- ✓ Acquired brain injuries
- ✓ Assistive technology

There are sixteen apartments at Quadrant House, each with one bedroom, an open-plan kitchen, living room and dining room, and a wet room-style bathroom. There is a communal living room for people to socialise and relax together. Quadrant House also has a garden with a patio and a BBQ for people to enjoy together. There's a lift to access the upper floors. Pets are welcome - we currently have a resident cat, dog and budgie.

Quadrant House is ideal for someone aged between 18 and 65 years of age. People we support here are very independent and enjoy a range of activities. Trips to local parks, Blackpool, Southport and Alton Towers are favourites, with hobbies including walking, cooking, listening to music, watching television, volunteering, shopping, gaming, playing the organ and the guitar, socialising and being in the community.

Warrington has a range of vibrant cafes, pubs, restaurants, high-street shops and banks, a post office and a library, two shopping centres the Museum of Policing in Cheshire, Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, Superbowl UK Warrington for bowling, and a Cineworld Cinema.



Supported Living for 7 people

Vicarage Court

Darwen, Lancashire

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Physical disabilities
- ✓ Acquired brain injuries
- ✓ Mental health

People living at Vicarage Court enjoy shopping, walking, listening to music, watching television, gardening, bingo, socialising, and being in the community. Day trips to Blackpool, the zoo, and Bury market are favourites. We have even been on holiday to Mexico and on a cruise together.

Vicarage Court has seven two-bedroom apartments. Each apartment has a main bedroom, spare bedroom, kitchen, living room, and a bathroom with bath and shower. There's also a garden with a BBQ for people to use when the weather is good.

Located in a residential area with peaceful surroundings, the local area has cafes, pubs and restaurants, as well as a post office and a library. Blackburn is easily accessible from the property and offers the Empire Theatre, museums and art galleries, a Vue cinema, Planet Ice for skating, the Mall Shopping Centre and Market, Tenpin Blackburn for bowling, and many historical landmarks.



Residential Care for 8 people

Duke's House

Wallasey, Merseyside

Life-changing residential care

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Physical disabilities
- ✓ Acquired brain injuries
- ✓ Mental health

Dukes House is a welcoming, supportive and stimulating residential service for people with complex care needs. The property has eight en-suite bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, lounge area, laundry room, a quiet room and a shared bathroom with a hydrotherapy bath.

Life at Dukes House is suitable for people with complex needs including brain injuries, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, non-complex physical disabilities and autism. The people we currently support at Dukes House are aged between 29 and 63, and live with autism, learning disabilities and challenges with communication.

They enjoy a variety of interests including walking, swimming, cycling, computers, rug making and beading, listening to music, baking, watching television, sports and visiting family. The property also has a large, accessible garden with a patio area, a sensory room, a family visiting room, and a training kitchen to support people with learning cooking skills.



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