

lifewayslinks

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

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Welcome to the
**Winter edition of
Lifeways Links!**

Interactive PDF



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



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 **bridget.suitters@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.

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



Gemma Gwynn-May
Referral Assessment Practitioner



Isabel Malheiros
Referral Assessment Practitioner



Nicola Reck
Referral Assessment Practitioner





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**

'Good' CQC rating retained across Cambridgeshire as Barber Gardens celebrates its 5th Birthday!

by Amy Gilbert, Managing Director, Supported Living

I'm really proud to share some great news from our supported living services in Cambridgeshire! Social Care Solutions Ltd (Cambridge) has once again been rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) marking the third time it has achieved a fully compliant rating since 2017.

Social Care Solutions Ltd (Cambridge) includes five settings supporting 22 people. The inspection, which took place earlier this year, highlighted how our teams treat people with dignity and respect. Even better, the people we support shared glowing feedback saying they feel safe, listened to, and confident voicing any concerns. That's exactly the kind of environment we work hard to create and clearly demonstrates the team's commitment to consistently delivering high-quality care to the people we support. The

report came out just days after Barber Gardens, one of our key services in Chatteris, celebrated its fifth birthday - and what a celebration it was! The afternoon was packed with fun and games, all co-produced by the people we support from the colour of the party hats to the DJ.

The event was a huge success, with families, team members from other services, and people we support from across Cambridgeshire all joining in. Awards were handed out for



everything from Best Smile and Kindest Heart to Nosiest Neighbour. The team also got to share in the fun, with titles like Happiest Team Member, Biggest Drama Queen, and Best Sense of Humour.

Victoria Thorton, the service manager for Barber Gardens since it opened in 2020, shared with me:

It was a lovely afternoon, with people supported across Cambridgeshire all coming together to celebrate, along with lots of staff and family members. We look forward to continuing to deliver high-quality care as part of the Lifeways family, and I can't wait to see the difference we can continue to make to people's lives over the next five years.

As I reflect on both the birthday celebrations and our 'Good' rating I couldn't be prouder. Both achievements show the hard work and positive impact of our teams every day to ensure the people we support live their best lives. Like Victoria, I can't wait to see what we can all continue to achieve together going forward.



Jordan's job leads him to greater independence and happiness every day

by Julie Atkin, Service Manager,
Willow Mews

One of the greatest joys of my role is seeing the people we support grow in confidence and independence - and Jordan's journey is a brilliant example of just that.

Jordan works at our local Women's Aid charity shop, which is a placement his parents originally found back in February 2023 to give him purpose and to show what he could achieve on his own. When Jordan then moved into Willow Mews and we took over his care and support, we were delighted to help him continue this placement.

From the start, our team worked closely with Jordan to encourage him to attend regularly and feel part of the Women's Aid team. The staff there were wonderfully welcoming and even provided him with a uniform, complete with T-shirt and lanyard, which instantly helped him feel included.

Together with the Women's Aid team, we made sure Jordan experienced a variety of tasks. At first, he needed lots of reassurance and sometimes



lost concentration, asking staff to finish tasks for him. But with gentle encouragement, patience, and by adding variety to the jobs each week, his confidence grew and before long he was taking on more and more by himself.

Now, Jordan works every Tuesday and Friday, rain or shine. He knows the routine, understands exactly what's expected of him, and although he still asks for reassurance occasionally, he's much more independent. These days, he only checks in

with staff if he's unsure about something, which is a big step forward that he's rightly proud of.

I still remember Jordan's first day: we spent the morning polishing furniture together. He didn't know anyone at the shop, but he was friendly, enthusiastic, and eager to meet new people. Two years on, Jordan has progressed to sorting and putting out stock, from clothes and toys to books. He even makes hot drinks for the volunteers and offers biscuits around so no one goes hungry!

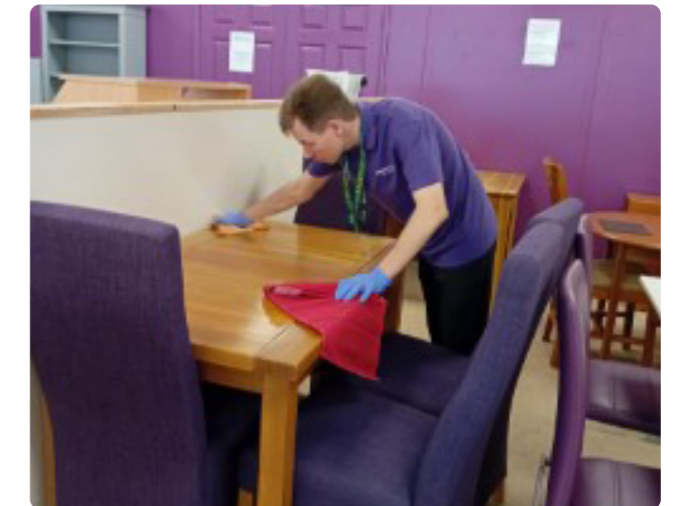
What stands out most is how much Jordan now owns his role. Tasks that once felt overwhelming are now part of a routine he manages with growing confidence. Our team is there mainly to ensure he's safe and to offer support when he needs it, but increasingly Jordan is the one taking the lead. It's been wonderful to help him engage with meaningful, personalised activities that truly bring him joy.

Today, Jordan is a happy and confident young man who feels proud to have a job he goes to twice a week. It's a role that gives him purpose, fulfilment, independence and a real sense of belonging in his community.

Every year, he's invited to Women's Aid's celebration evening, and he absolutely loves it. He tells everyone about his invitation, and we always

make sure to capture photos of him dancing and chatting with the people he now sees as part of his extended team.

Jordan's journey shows exactly what's possible when someone is supported to thrive and we are very pleased to see his progress and his independence grow.



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!



Barber Gardens get into the festive spirit!

by Victoria Thorton, Service Manager

There was a great atmosphere at Barber Gardens when everyone got into Christmas mode by decorating the service! The photos show what a fantastic job they did - everyone helped out and had lots of fun.



Amber achieves a Master's Degree and helps people we support!

by Suzanne Rosenberg,
Head of Learning and Talent

We are celebrating success in the South East as Amber Kingsnorth, our Lead PBS Practitioner for the South, has achieved her Master's Degree in Analysis and Intervention in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

This incredible accomplishment – achieved through hard work, enthusiasm and determination – reflects her passion for improving lives and shows true dedication.



Working tirelessly for two years, Amber studied part-time at the University of Kent and graduated at the beautiful Canterbury Cathedral. This fantastic achievement is already making a big difference in her role at Lifeways.

Throughout her studies, Lifeways helped Amber with external clinical supervision and incredible guidance of her manager and team members. She shared “I couldn’t have done this without the support from my team and Lifeways”.

As part of her degree, Amber completed a clinical placement at Grosvenor Road, where she worked with an outstanding team to assess Lewis, one of the people we support. The assessment



focussed on Lewis’ quality of life and behaviours of concern, and the recommendations made a positive impact, with Lewis now engaging in new meaningful activities that align to his sensory needs and developed skills – such as swimming and shopping. There’s also been a significant reduction in Lewis’ behaviours of concern and an increase in independence and quality of life, which is fantastic news. All this means that the people we support and the care teams Amber works with benefit from her valuable knowledge and achievement.

Amber added:

It’s already helping me to support people and services to achieve even better positive outcomes. I loved every minute of studying and learning, and I’m excited to take on the next challenge, so watch this space!

Congratulations Amber on this fantastic accomplishment and for making a real difference in the lives of the people we support.



Great British Care Awards regional final winner in London!

by Andrew Fowle, Area Manager

I'm absolutely delighted to share some fantastic news from our South East region - Sara Serrao, service manager for Travers Court, has won the Front Line Leader category at the Great British Care Awards London regional finals!

On Friday 14 November, during the evening awards event, Sara was announced as the winner, beating all other nominations from across the region. It was a big moment not just for Sara, but for our whole team.



Sara will now go on to represent Lifeways at the National Awards in Birmingham in February, and I know we'll all be cheering her on every step of the way.

The judges shared some wonderful feedback about why Sara stood out. They highlighted how she returned from maternity leave and immediately stepped back into her role with even greater energy, focus and commitment. Her drive to improve outcomes for both the people we support and for her staff team really shone through.

After her win, Sara shared what's motivated her over the past year:

My focus has been on improving access to social mobility by bringing different services together for activities and helping to build strong friendships. Another priority has been ensuring we deliver the right quality of care, while also dedicating time to supporting my team so they feel listened to and valued. I have also worked to empower our quality checkers by giving them opportunities to complete checks in different services, helping to build their confidence and independence.



During her awards interview, Sara explained to the judges how she manages to maintain her high standards while leading 35 team members and supporting 21 people - no small task! Her passion for frontline care was clear. Starting her career as a Support Worker, before studying Social Work, she has brought years of hands-on experience to her leadership role. Originally from Portugal, Sara returned from maternity leave just 11 months ago with a renewed vision for what great-quality care should look like, and that vision has clearly made an impact.

For me, Sara's win represents everything we strive for at Lifeways: dedication, compassion, teamwork and a genuine commitment to helping people live fulfilling and independent lives. She embodies those values every day, and we are all delighted to see her recognised on such a big stage.

We also want to celebrate our other fantastic finalists at the South East regional final this year. To be shortlisted as finalists against the whole of the London region is a huge achievement in itself!

- **Cabrine Nalugo - Support Worker**
- **Stanley Moyo - Support Worker**
- **Liza Tomkins - Team Leader**
- **Nadrah Nampijja - Team Leader**
- **Ibrahim Bamwayana - Service Manager**

Good luck at the Nationals, Sara — we've all got our fingers firmly crossed for you!



Current vacancies in the South East



Supported Living for 13 people

Mayfair Court

Raunds, Northamptonshire

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Physical disabilities
- ✓ Mental health conditions
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Tailored assistive technology

Mayfair Court has 13 self-contained apartments, each with a kitchen, a living room, and a bathroom. Three apartments have one bedroom and the other ten have two bedrooms. Most bathrooms are standard with some designed as wet rooms. Five of the apartments are fully accessible.

Our dedicated team are ready to support people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health conditions and autism. The age of people we support here is between 24 and 65 – some people require a high level of support whilst others are more independent. A few people enjoy regular visits from an aromatherapist and masseuse. Small pets are welcome too – one person has a pet guinea pig.

Mayfair Court is in Raunds, which offers a full range of amenities including pubs, restaurants, a library, and a post office. Rushden Lakes Shopping centre, Cineworld cinema, and Waendel Leisure Centre (with a swimming pool) are all nearby.



Supported Living for 14 people

Pear Tree Court

Rothwell, Northamptonshire

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Physical disabilities
- ✓ Acquired brain injuries
- ✓ Mental health
- ✓ Tailored assistive technology

Pear Tree Court has 14 one-bedroom apartments, each with an open-plan kitchen and living room, and a bathroom with a shower. Our accessible garden has a patio and a BBQ. We have tailored assistive technology which includes an intercom system and CCTV to provide added peace of mind. The property also has a lift.

Life at Pear Tree Court is ideal for people with autism, learning disabilities, mental health conditions and physical disabilities. The people we support here enjoy listening to music, watching television, walking, visiting day centres, volunteering, shopping, cooking, swimming, playing football, going to the gym, bingo, gaming, and being out in the community. There are three pet cats here too! People choose how they spend their time and trips to tourist attractions, London and Birmingham are favourites!

We are in Rothwell, which has vibrant cafes, pubs and restaurants, as well as a library and a post office. Kettering and Northampton are close by for all larger amenities. Montsaye Community Sports Centre also offers exercise classes, a gym, sports courts and a swimming pool.



Supported Living for 2 people

Moorland Avenue

Lincoln, Lincolnshire

Shared House

- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Learning disabilities

Moorland House is a three-bedroom detached house with a long galley kitchen, a dining room, a living room and a wet room style bathroom. There is also an accessible garden with a patio and a BBQ, perfect for relaxing in the warmer weather.

We are ready to welcome a gentleman to join the person we currently support, who is in his thirties. He lives with autism and learning disabilities and enjoys anything to do with Marvel characters. He visits toy fairs, reads comic books, watches films and goes to car boot sales. He is an introverted person who appreciates a calm atmosphere. Trips to the coast, days out to tourist attractions and attending the local disability disco are also firm favourites.

Moorland Avenue is in a vibrant residential area with cafés, pubs, restaurants, a post office and a library. There is a local Fitness First centre with a swimming pool and exercise classes. The area also offers many picturesque walks and nearby Lincoln has all larger amenities including shops, a cinema, Bowling, Lincoln Castle and museums.



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