

ISSUE 13 | WINTER 2025

lifewayslinks

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

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Interactive PDF



Welcome to the
Winter edition of
Lifeways Links!



Hello, I'm George Bray and I'm your local Lifeways Business Development and Relationship Manager for the **South 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 george.bray@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



Andy Hood
Senior Assessment Manager



Jean Dawe
Referral Assessment Practitioner



Ruby Silverman
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**

How I started my own podcast, with support from Lifeways

by Jessie, a person we support

Hi, I'm Jessie. I live at a Lifeways supported living service in Stourport and I've just launched my very own podcast!

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.

Amy Gilbert, Managing Director of Lifeways' Supported Living division, said she's incredibly proud of me and the hard work I've put in. That means a lot. I'm determined to keep growing *Let's Collaborate* and use it as a way to share stories that deserve to be heard.



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.

Staffordshire and Walsall services join for spooktacular Halloween celebration

by Nicola Beasley, Area Manager

It's not often that you find ghouls, cheerleaders and Smurfs in the same place, but that's exactly what happened at our Halloween celebration recently!

Held at Stafford Rangers Football Club, the event brought together more than 50 people from 15 different Lifeways services across Staffordshire and Walsall.

From the very beginning, the event was co-produced by our team members and the people we support. Together, they chose the venue, planned the entertainment, picked the food, and even decided on the competitions and decorations. It was a true team effort, and it showed in every detail – from the music



playlist to the balloons chosen to reflect the colours of our CHOICE values.

We had karaoke, danced to spooky favourites like *Thriller* and *Ghostbusters*, and raised £50 through a lucky dip and raffle for a local charity. People we support also created handmade items to donate, which added a lovely personal touch.

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. The feedback was fantastic, and we're already planning to make it a regular tradition.

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.

I'm so proud of our teams and the people we support for putting on such a fabulous event - it was a shining example of our CHOICE values in action: Caring, Honest, One Team, Innovative, Courageous and Equal.

As Gareth Roberts, our Director of Quality, said: "This event was a brilliant example of co-production in action - people supported by Lifeways working alongside our teams to shape and deliver something truly special. The creativity, enthusiasm and teamwork behind the celebration perfectly reflect what Lifeways stands for."

I'm already looking forward to the next opportunity for us to come together again, have fun and show what Lifeways is all about.

“An incredible turnaround”

– Larchwood House rated ‘Good’ by CQC

by Sara Morgan, Registered Manager

Until recently Larchwood House, which supports up to eight autistic people and people with learning disabilities, had been rated “Requires Improvement” by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). While that was tough to hear, it gave us a clear instruction: we had work to do.

Fast forward to today, and, following a major improvement plan by our team members, the service has been turned around and Larchwood House has now been rated ‘Good’ in all areas by the CQC. It’s a huge achievement, and I couldn’t be prouder of our team.

Every single person we support deserves the highest standard of care. That belief drove our hard work, dedication and passion to make meaningful changes that created a safe, caring, and empowering environment for the people we support.

The inspectors saw the difference and their report said the service is now fully compliant with all regulations and has addressed all previous concerns relating to safe care, staff training, person-centred support, and governance.

They found:

- *The service provides a safe and supportive environment, with trained staff who know how to report safeguarding concerns and manage risks, including those related to medication*
- *The team effectively supports people to live healthy, independent lives, both at home and in the community*
- *A strong person-centred approach, with team members helping individuals make choices, pursue personal goals, and engage in activities that reflect their interests and preferences*
- *A positive culture at the service, with effective leadership and a motivated staff team*
- *People were supported to have a full and active life in line with their preferences and choices about how they liked to spend their time*



One of my favourite moments from the inspection was hearing feedback from the people we support. One person said: “I love being here. All the staff are my favourites, and I can be myself and do whatever I want.”

Families noticed the change too. A relative was quoted as saying: “The main things I think about are the quality of the care and how [family member] feels. The staff team make sure these two things are both brilliant.” That kind of feedback means the world to us.

The CQC report also highlighted how our care plans are clear and detailed, that we have enough trained, competent staff to meet people’s needs and that we follow good infection prevention and control measures.

Karen Jones, Managing Director of Lifeways’ Residential division, said:

I’m so proud of the Larchwood team for the huge amount of effort, commitment and dedication they’ve shown in turning the service around. This latest CQC 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.

We’re striving for ‘Outstanding’ next, but for now, we’re celebrating this well-earned milestone.

Major £750k renovation completed at Burton-on-Trent residential care home

by Karen Jones,
Managing Director, Residential

Seeing Trent View reopen after its £750,000 full refurbishment was a real privilege – not just for me, but for everyone involved. This project has been months in the making, and it's been incredible to watch the transformation unfold.

Trent View is a beautiful Victorian building in Burton-on-Trent that provides residential care for adults with learning disabilities and autism. When we began the renovation, the building was in a poor state of repair. But thanks to the dedication of our Property Team, led by Andrea Ellison and Carl Wilkinson, it's now been brought back to life while still preserving all the character that makes it so special.

We officially reopened the home on 19 August 2025 with an open day for families and professionals to showcase the improvements. Laura, one of the people we support, had the honour of cutting the ribbon while being supported by her mum.

What's made this project so meaningful is the way we've involved the people we support every step of the way. From choosing colours to picking out furnishings, they've helped shape their home. That's what person-centred care looks like in action.

The list of improvements is extensive:

- 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



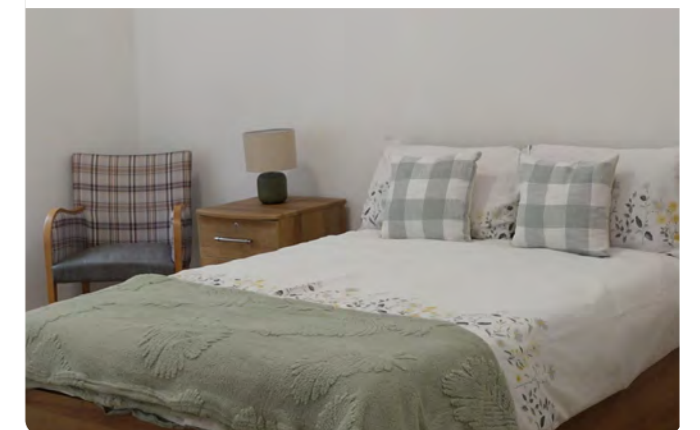
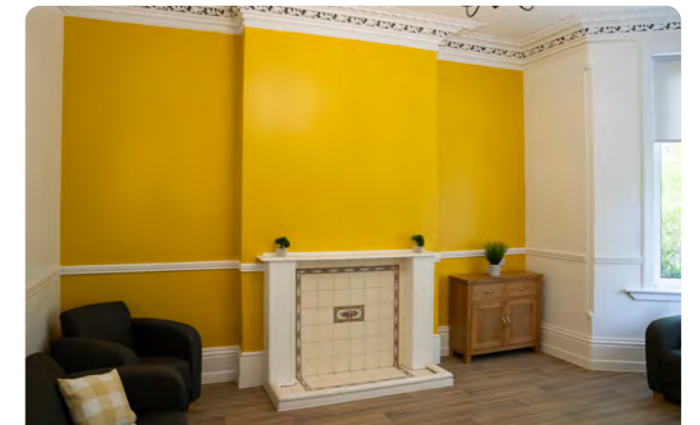
Every detail has been carefully considered to create a top-quality, safe, homely space for the people we support.

I want to give a special shout-out to Ellen Parton, our Registered Manager at Trent View. Her passion and commitment have been instrumental in ensuring this project was a success. As Ellen said, "Everything we hoped for has been delivered." That's exactly what we aim for at Lifeways.

This project is part of a wider programme of refurbishments we're delivering across the country and it's a brilliant example of how we're investing in the future of care. As Kieron Steele, our Chief Financial Officer, put it, "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."

Trent View currently supports four adults, with space for up to nine. It was last rated 'Good' by the CQC in 2022, and with these improvements, we're confident it will continue to be a place where people thrive.

I'm excited to see the difference the renovations at Trent View and other Lifeways residential services make to the lives of the people we support.



Current vacancies in the South West



Supported Living for 28 people



Oak House

Birmingham, West Midlands

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Learning disabilities
- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Physical disabilities
- ✓ Mental health

Oak House is a modern and beautifully finished property with twenty-eight one-bedroom apartments, arranged over three floors. Each apartment has a large open-plan kitchen, lounge and dining room, and a wet room style bathroom. The property has a communal lounge and an accessible garden with a patio for people to socialise.

The Oak House apartments would be well suited to people aged between 18 and 65. As there are a lot of shared spaces, a calm, sociable and active person would be very happy here.

The local area offers welcoming cafes, pubs, shops, a post office and high-street banks. There is also year-round access to Perry Common Library, and Kingstanding Wellbeing Centre for swimming and other fitness activities. People also enjoy going to the coast, Sutton Park Donkey Sanctuary, paintball, bingo, and trips to the local pubs.



Supported Living for 16 people



Moor House

Hereford, Herefordshire

Purpose-built apartments

- ✓ Mental health specialism
- ✓ Beautiful period building
- ✓ Virtual tour available

Moor House is a development of 16 self-contained and spacious apartments in a beautiful period building in Hereford, providing accommodation and 24-hour support for people with complex mental health needs.

Set within the quiet location of Widemarsh Common, Moor House is a 15 minute stroll from Hereford Town Centre where there are shops, cafés, restaurants an art college and a retail park. The Courtyard, Herefordshire's Cultural Creative Hub Theatre, Cinema and Gallery is a short walk and offers a creative space for the whole community to share.

There is a local gym and football pitches just a 2-minute walk away offering various training sessions and clubs. There is also an excellent cycle route nearby. There are bus stops across the common and Hereford train station is within easy reach with direct services into Birmingham New Street station.



Residential Care for 8 people



Greenlands View

Bartley Green, Birmingham

Shared bungalow

- ✓ Eight en-suite bedrooms
- ✓ Sensory bathroom
- ✓ Large wheelchair accessible garden

Greenlands View is a detached bungalow with a kitchen, an open-plan lounge and dining area, and a second living room. There are eight bedrooms, each with a wet room style en-suite, and a shared sensory bathroom with a jacuzzi bath. Residents can also enjoy a sensory room and an accessible garden with a patio, two swings and a BBQ.

Greenlands View is ideal for people with complex care and support needs, aged between 20 and 40. The current residents engage in a wide range of activities including walking, cooking, socialising, shopping, listening to music, going to the disco, sensory play, arts and crafts, swimming and watching films.

The neighbouring towns of Halesowen, Harborne and Northfield offer a wide range of shops whilst nearby Birmingham has a large range of amenities. Day trips to Liverpool and Manchester are also firm favourites.



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