

Belong Life

SUMMER 2025



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BELONG
VILLAGES



Word from the team

Chief Executive Martin Rix reflects on achievements from the past quarter and what lies ahead as we move into summer.

With Belong Birkdale on track to open spring 2026, we are now gearing up to launch our first coastal village. Ahead of this, we are launching Belong at Home in the area, and have leased premises in the heart of Southport to provide a base for our home care service, as well as providing the opportunity for the local community to drop in and find out more about village plans. In particular, apartment plans and pricing will be available from the autumn, when it will be possible to place a reservation.

It has also been an exciting period for our existing villages. Belong Chester had its first inspection by the Care Quality Commission, securing a GOOD rating, and Belong Wigan was recognised in the Top Five UK Care Homes by care home comparison website, Lottie. It was one of three Belong villages to win a Top 100 award; the others being Atherton and Crewe. Though Lottie didn't declare which home they might consider to be in the number one spot, here at Belong, we all know it's Wigan, really! Congratulations to all our teams on this national accolade.

Sticking with awards, there was also national recognition for Belong at Home, which won a Top 20 Award from homecare.co.uk for the eighth year running, as well as two of its branches (Warrington and Wigan) being recognised in the Top 20 home care services in the North West. Both are rated 10 out of 10 based on independently verified customer reviews, a status also held by Belong at Home Crewe. Again, congratulations go to all our teams for consistently providing outstanding service levels. Our annual customer service survey has consistently shown that 100% of Belong at Home customers would recommend our service.

In other recognition, Belong Atherton received a mention in a parliamentary debate on the state of dementia in the UK when MP for Leigh and Atherton, Jo Platt, called for greater access to high quality dementia support in the community, highlighting Belong Atherton as an example of a 'brilliant organisation' improving outcomes for those living with dementia. She also praised the work of our Admiral Nurses on the back of their shortlisting in the national Dementia Care Awards. It was a proud moment for the team, and one that was thoroughly deserved.

Finally, there were two developments which were particularly pleasing in being borne out of our customer and colleague feedback. The first is that we have now provided two Belong minibuses to facilitate outings across the group and we are very excited to see them taking to the roads this summer, creating a wealth of new opportunities for residents.

Secondly, as a values-based organisation, living our values has always been of prime importance to Belong. You may have noticed the appearance of new vision and values posters in our villages, following a listening exercise with colleagues and customers to refresh how we articulate these and make sure they truly resonate with everyone in our community (see the back page for more on this). We are delighted with the results and hope you will recognise them in your interactions across the organisation. Have a wonderful summer!

Martin Rix, Belong Chief Executive



Belong Chester Rated 'Good' By Regulators

“To know we are doing a sound job is testament to the hard work and compassion of our team here.”

There has been positive news for dedicated carers at Belong Chester, which has received its first inspection and been certified as 'Good' by Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors, with praise for its exceptional understanding of the needs of people it supports.

The report from the independent regulator of health and social care in England summarised the village as having 'a focus on supporting people to enjoy life' underpinned by welcoming the local community to join its customers in everyday life, including use of its on-site bistro, salon and gym, and partaking in its vibrant activities programme.

The report comments received from relatives during the inspection, including: "They [staff] treat my relative as part of their family, with utmost care and respect, so kind and caring." and "It's brilliant, they look after [my relative's] physical and emotional wellbeing."

Support for customers to live healthy lives was singled out, with the gym, and in-house exercise and rehabilitation department assisting in maximising independence, choice and control through personalised exercise programmes.

Belong's dementia expertise and its Admiral Nurse service with charity, Dementia UK, was also recognised, the latter providing vital assistance to families, such as advice on securing finance and arranging external health assessments, as well as emotional support.

For people, not profit

Caroline Ray, General Manager at Belong Chester, commented: "We are especially pleased to receive a 'Good' CQC rating. We are for people, not profit, and so our ethos is to promote quality of life for our customers by assisting them in any way we can to live as independently as possible. To know we are doing a sound job is testament to the hard work and compassion of our team here."

In further success, inspectors praised the overall care provision, including Belong's shared vision, strategy and culture, and its links and collaborations with partners in the wider community.

Intergenerational approach

Inspectors also drew attention to the children's nursery integrated with the village, operated by charity, Ready

Generations. They lauded the 'innovative approach' to care for offering a wealth of opportunities for older people to enjoy the benefits of intergenerational relationships, with relatives describing the ethos as 'amazing' and the interaction between old and young as 'a joy to behold'.

Caroline continued: "This is our first inspection since we opened and we are proud of the many positives that it highlights. It also gives us some advice on areas where we can improve to enhance our rating further in the future, and we have already made excellent progress on these aspects. We want to provide the very best service to those we care for and we are excited about continuing this journey in our wonderful village."

Residents and the team came together to celebrate the achievement with an evening of feel-good music, courtesy of Musical Delights, whilst enjoying delicious charcuterie boards created by the village's bistro team, and raised a glass (or two) of bubbly in celebration.

A Customer's View

Nothing is more important to Belong than our customers, which is why we love hearing about their experiences.

For this issue, we speak to **Tim Davenport**, whose family became Belong at Home Chester customers in spring, when his mother, Jean, began using the service.



Pictured: Tim and Jean

When our chat begins, Tim and family have just returned from Czechia, where son Alex and new daughter-in-law, Olivia, have just got hitched. After a drive to Hull, a ferry to Rotterdam, a stop-off in Germany, and a stay in Prague, followed by travelling to the east of the country for the big day itself, to say it was tiring is perhaps an understatement.

Tim begins: "It was quite spectacular! Tiring, but very worthwhile! The wedding was in a castle, so it had a medieval theme with knights in armour and a jousting display. Mum was also very pleased to put in an appearance. You wouldn't have thought a 90-year-old would go all that way, but that's Mum. She's independent and family focused, and we were a bit nervous, but it all worked out."

Cheshire life

Jean lives in Hoole, in a sheltered housing arrangement, just outside of Chester city centre, with Tim and his wife a few minutes' walk away, and she has a spare room the family uses to work from or stay over.

Tim continues: "The set-up has always worked well, allowing us to keep an eye on Mum, though we were anticipating her health and care needs might increase as she gets older, so we engaged advisors. They suggested we look at a few community care operators in the area and Belong at Home was one of them."

After making an initial enquiry, the family met with Chester Team Leader, Heather Mills, who listened to their needs and guided them through the options available, based on Jean's needs. She chose an hour a week, including checking in, running a shopping errand, or going for a walk – whatever she needs that week.

"Heather was particularly constructive and thorough, offering information and ideas," Tim says. "Once we'd made the decision, she introduced us to Siobhan, the Community Support Worker who would be assisting Mum. Having the same face each week, that familiarity and continuity is important to us and so far, it's all going well."

Future planning

Tim goes on to share: "We say to Mum, it's not so much that she needs the service right now but, in the future, if she needs more of it, it's already in place."

"We're mindful of our situation and if, for example, my wife and I need a bit of respite, or if the time comes when Mum needs residential care, we've already made contact and having everything set up means that if and when more intensive support is needed, we can ramp that up."

With a flexible approach for customers, Belong at Home was able to accommodate a gap in the weekly visits, allowing for the continental adventure to take place with no cost incurred. Now, the routine resumes as Siobhan is back, popping in to see Jean, and the pair are steadily building a relationship.

Tim finishes: "I think from the family's view, there will always be the question, 'Is this a good idea?'. But if we're not around and need to call Heather and Siobhan to provide a bit more support, I have no concerns at all. Right from the outset, Belong at Home's professionalism has been very reassuring, and we are confident that in time Mum will get used to having a carer visit her."

If you would like to contribute to the next 'A Customer's View' column, please pass on your details to a member of staff or email the editor at: tracy.brookes@belong.org.uk

Spotlight on Belong Atherton

Role Model for Dementia Care



Last month, Jo visited the village to meet with customers and colleagues and find out more about the dementia support available. Pictured: (L-R) Jo Platt MP meets tenant, Iris Duffy, and Nicola Johnstone, Belong Atherton General Manager (Credit: ARCO (Associated Retirement Community Operators)).

In a recent parliamentary debate on the current state of dementia care, Jo Platt MP for Leigh and Atherton called for greater access to high quality dementia support in the community, highlighting Belong Atherton as an example of a 'brilliant organisation' improving outcomes for those living with dementia.

Along with praising the 'hard work and kindness' of the village's colleagues as a whole, she congratulated Admiral Nurses, Caroline Clifton and Bridget Lawler on their recent shortlisting at the national Dementia Care Awards. She highlighted the 'invaluable' specialist dementia support they provide, namely: advice, helping to arrange assessments with healthcare professionals, and the essential guidance on securing financial support.

Jo said: "At a local level, we are fortunate enough to have organisations that go above and beyond offering care, comfort, and valuable support [for people living with dementia]. I could not be prouder of the staff at Belong Atherton and to see their hard work and kindness recognised at a national level. It is truly inspirational."

Scan the QR code to watch Jo's speech in full.



Top Nursing Accolade

Belong Atherton has been awarded the Chief Nurse for Social Care Team Award for its outstanding contribution to social care, namely in its support of the development of students entering the profession.

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) accolade recognises the eight-strong nursing team in its collaboration with Greater Manchester universities, playing a key role in researching student allied health professionals' (AHPs) training within multidisciplinary care home environments.

Led by The University of Salford, 'Not the last resort: The longitudinal impact of interprofessional student training care home initiative' saw undergraduates including those in nursing, physiotherapy, psychotherapy and social work immerse themselves in hands-on training at the village for the project.

Belong's award-winning holistic approach to care was selected to facilitate the pilot version of the scheme, with a goal to explore alternatives for training health and social care professionals.

At present, students typically learn in isolation within their respective discipline. However, upon qualifying, it

is common for them to go on to work as part of interprofessional teams.

Across all Belong villages, older people are supported through an ethos of viewing the 'whole person' and their needs, rather than focusing on a single aspect of care, one at a time. Through collaboration of in-house nurses, support workers, and exercise and rehabilitation specialists, expertise is pooled for the benefit of customers, including those living with dementia.

The students were able to combine this ethos with learnings from their studies, as well as have the chance to share the latest evidence-based nursing practice with colleagues and make their own recommendations.

In turn, Belong Atherton residents felt the scheme impacted positively on their physical and emotional wellbeing, citing the benefits of having a diverse range of professionals to meet their needs in their home; an improved feeling of social connectedness; and a sense of purpose through helping the students in their learning.

Jemma Sharratt, Support Manager and Nurse at Belong Atherton, commented: "We are pleased to have mentored the students by taking their classroom



Pictured: Belong Atherton nursing team with their Chief Nurse for Social Care team award.

learning and applying it to real-life experience. They embraced the opportunity and thrived whilst working here and equally, we learned a great deal from our newest colleagues to the profession."

Last year, the project made the finalist shortlist at the Nursing Times Awards for the Social Care Nursing Accolade.

Belong Atherton General Manager and nurse, Nicola Johnstone, added: "With the political conversation around social care in the limelight, we are pleased to promote the fantastic opportunities to build careers in care environments for those working in various disciplines across health and social care."

Memory Lane...

Belong Wigan resident Winifred Gregory (Win), who moved into the village in November last year, was born and raised in the borough of Wigan.

Born in Hindley in 1931, Win and her younger brother Frank were brought up from a young age by her mother, May, following the death of her father, Percy, when Win was only 11. She attended St. Benedict's Primary School in the village, before the family moved to Wigan to be nearer to two of her aunts, Clare (known as Clara) and Mary.

Win's mum was from a close-knit family of five sisters, of which May was the youngest. Her other aunts, Kate and Maggie, also lived in Wigan.

As well as looking after Win and Frank, Win's mum would do bar work in a local hotel to bring in extra money. Win remembers that the lady owner was particularly kind to her and Frank, letting them sit in the kitchen while they waited for their mother to finish her shift.

Wartime memories

Win was only 8 at the start of World War II. She recalls how tight things were in terms of rationing: "Everything was in short supply, especially things like fruit and meat. Mum was always very careful with rations to make sure we didn't run out."

On the outbreak of the war, the family were issued with gas masks, which they had to take with them everywhere they went. "I remember being jealous of Frank, because he got a red gas mask (made for younger children) and all of ours were black," Win says with a chuckle.

At school they would regularly practise putting on their masks, as well as undertaking air raid drills, which involved moving to underground shelters that had been constructed where the school's garden had been.

Win also remembers the air raid shelter they would use if the sirens sounded while they were at home. It was located in the basement of a disused shop next door to where they lived. One night when they were in the shelter, they heard an air raid warden shouting that a nearby street had been hit by a bomb.

It had blown up the Methodist church on the street, which luckily was empty and took the brunt of the explosion. Further along the street was a pub, full of drinkers, fortunately protected by the church's substantial walls.

Despite money being tight and long holidays at the seaside out of reach, Win, Frank and May did enjoy the occasional day out at places like Blackpool, taking in the delights of the amusements. Win recalls one time when they planned to ride a roller coaster, which started at the top of a long flight of stairs. However, when Win got to the top and looked down, she decided it was a bit too high and sheepishly navigated the stairs back down again. The train ride home to Wigan was more to her liking.

Pictured: Winifred and Frank



Winifred enjoys many a party at the village.

Working life

After leaving secondary school, Win got a job in Liverpool with a major chain of furniture retailers, where she spent most of her working life. Towards the end of her career she moved to a small business in St Helens, where she worked until she retired. She speaks fondly of the business owners, Ken and Annette, who became great friends and are still very much in touch with Win today. "They still come and visit me in Belong," she says with a smile.

Following the end of the war and into the 1950s, Britain was starting to recover from the austerity the nation had been forced to endure.

Embracing technology

In common with many other families, Win recalls the purchase of their first television in anticipation of the Queen's coronation in 1953, which was to be broadcast live by the BBC: "The thrill of seeing moving images on a little box in your front room was a magical experience."

No-one then could have foreseen that 70 years later, Win would confidently be making video calls to her family and friends on her iPad from her room in Belong.



Dream Wedding Comes True After Father of the Bride Learns to Walk Again

A Staffordshire family has had their wedding dream come true after the bride's father relearned to walk again, thanks to his persistence, dogged determination and the help of support workers and exercise specialists at his home, at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Francis Baylis has been living with Parkinson's and suspected dementia for the past five years, meaning the 73-year-old is unsteady on his feet and requires assistance to aid movement in his everyday life, including the use of a wheelchair.

Upon receiving news of his middle daughter Lizzie's engagement, the former sales manager made it his mission to take on the ceremonial tradition of escorting the bride down the aisle, unaided, enlisting Belong's in-house exercise and rehabilitation service, and his carers to help.

With a hi-tech gym and exercise specialists qualified in working with older people, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme works to create free personalised exercise programmes for all residential care residents, designed to promote independence and quality of life. For the father of the bride, the goal was to increase strength and alleviate slower movement, stiffness and rigidity commonly associated with Parkinson's, whilst boosting confidence to achieve the feat.

With group workouts and one-to-one training in the village gym, progress was proving fruitful, especially thanks to virtual cycle visits to Cornwall and Ireland on specialist exercise bikes adapted for wheelchair users.

Meanwhile, carers encouraged him through daily walks to the wedding march tune of Here Comes the Bride, and in the background, made arrangements for the 160-mile round trip to

the picturesque North Wales countryside wedding, ultimately attending to support the family.

Recalling her father's big moment, Lizzie continues: "He absolutely smashed it! It had given him a sense of purpose, something to work towards, though Dad can really pull at your heartstrings to get out of doing things he knows he can do. The Belong team were amazing keeping his focus on track. They have a great relationship with him, being firm but fair and they put everything in place to make it happen."

The right move

It was after a number of years being supported at home by a live-in caregiver and help from his three daughters that Francis made the decision to move into Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme. Since then, he has immersed himself in village life, making much use of its bistro and the integrated Belong Heritage Gallery, whilst enjoying 'banter' with staff, even cheekily making requests for bacon butties at 2am.

Lizzie finishes: "Initially, Dad had made a joke of it all – very much of his character. He then said he wouldn't miss it for the world, and he was really determined. To see him rise to the challenge was very emotional; he loved being with his family and it was a special moment for all of us."

Josephine Mollison, General Manager at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, added: "We are thrilled for the Baylis family and Francis's achievement. They had thought it wouldn't have been an option, but our ethos is to make moments like this happen and it goes to show that with a support network of dedicated carers and exercise expertise, you can achieve your dreams. Congratulations to all the family!"



Belong Wigan



Belong Crewe



Belong Atherton



Belong Villages Named in Best in UK

Belong has been named three times in the UK's top 100 care homes 2025, with its Atherton, Crewe, and Wigan villages all picking up accolades.

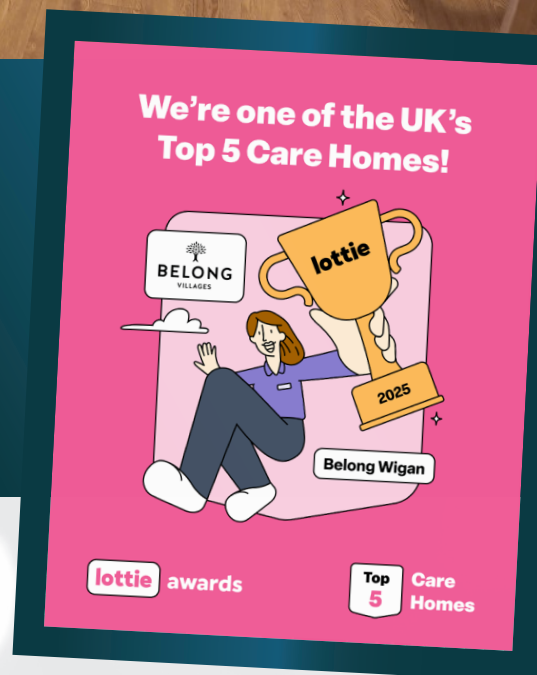
The first-ever Lottie Awards from the online care finder recognise and celebrate care homes across the country that demonstrate exceptional commitment to residents, families, and staff. Lottie's team conducted a comprehensive, data-driven review of thousands of homes, assessing key criteria that matter most to families when choosing care, including Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings, enquiry response times, digital presence, team wellbeing, and resident feedback.

Martin Rix, Chief Executive of Belong, commented: "Today, customers have a wide choice when it comes to entrusting their care and we truly believe we offer something special, with our village living concept that supports customers' needs as they change. To be named amongst the best in the country is a distinction we are very honoured to accept."

The winning trio of Belong villages all hold 'Outstanding' CQC ratings placing them in the exceptional 4% of adult social care settings in England to achieve the feat.

For the recruitment and professional development of its colleagues, the organisation holds the prestigious Gold Investors in People accreditation, thanks to its strong commitment to culture and training, collaborative working and encouraging innovation. As a result, Belong is amongst the industry's – and country's – top employers.

Will Donnelly, co-founder and CEO of Lottie, added: "The launch of the Lottie Awards is about recognising the incredible dedication of care professionals who make a real difference in people's lives every day. To be named among the Top 100 from over 14,000 care homes nationwide is a huge achievement. These care homes are not just meeting residents' needs, they're redefining later living by creating vibrant and supportive communities that deliver exceptional care and experiences."



Eight Years at the Top for Belong at Home

Carers at Belong at Home are celebrating after securing a place in the UK's Top 20 home care groups for the eighth year in a row. Two of the group's services, in Warrington and Wigan, both rated 10 out of 10 based on customer reviews, were also listed in the Top 20 for their local area.

Based on independent reviews on leading comparison website, [homecare.co.uk](https://www.homecare.co.uk), Belong at Home, which operates in the North West and West Midlands, has been named in the country's Top 20 Large & Mid-size Home Care Groups 2025 – the only not-for-profit service in the country to have won the award every year since 2018.

A family member of a customer in Macclesfield wrote:

"The Belong at Home team are kind, professional, compassionate, punctual, contactable, thoughtful, thorough, excellent at communicating, and supportive to both client and family. I'm so grateful to have found such a compassionate and caring home care provider. My parent looks forward to their visits and thoroughly enjoys trips out. Thank you."

Supporting people in their homes, as well as those residing in the Belong village apartments, Belong at Home provides one-



to-one personal care, housekeeping, food preparation, as well as running errands, helping with excursions, offering companionship, all with the goal of enabling customers to maintain their independence. The team also provides transport for those who wish to take advantage of the Experience Days day care service at their local Belong village.

Andrew Shield, Head of Operations at Belong at Home, said: "While the hard work and expertise of our teams are consistently recognised in the [Homecare.co.uk](https://www.homecare.co.uk) awards, we never take this for granted. We're constantly striving to maintain and improve the levels of service for the people we support. It's therefore incredibly assuring to be listed among the top home care services, both in the North West and nationwide."

One daughter of a customer in Newcastle-under-Lyme wrote:

"What can I say? The care provided to my mum was outstanding. Carers paid attention to her needs and went above and beyond with everything – including tending to Mum's dogs. Mum thoroughly enjoyed her trips out to the zoo, the Lakes, walking along the canal, for lunch, even to a pub where she was served by a robot. I highly commend all the staff."



Chester resident walking again extols benefits of personalised rehabilitation programme

A Belong Chester resident Tony Mulhearn is able to walk again unaided and has dispensed with pain relief medication thanks to a personalised exercise programme facilitated by the village's on-site gym and says that he wants to share his story to help others facing similar challenges.

Tony, aged 80, who lives in an apartment at the Belong Chester, was in constant pain, had no movement in his back and was unable to walk upstairs as a result of fused lower vertebrae, as well as knee instability caused by a motorcycle accident over 40 years ago.

Doctors told Tony that the only course of treatment was increasing amounts of pain relief medication, including morphine, leaving him feeling tired and confused.

Setting Goals

When he moved to Belong Chester in October last year, he asked the village's dedicated exercise specialist, Louise Warr, who is also an injury rehabilitation expert, if there was anything she could do to help improve his quality of life. After a chat, the pair settled on a goal of Tony being able to walk without support by Christmas through a programme involving twice-weekly one-to-one personalised training sessions, starting with basic exercises to improve core stability and strength.

All Belong village customers have access to a specialist gym, run by a highly qualified exercise specialist who has experience working with older people. Everyone who moves into a Belong village household for 24-hour support is assessed by the exercise specialist and offered a free personalised exercise or rehabilitation programme, and members of the public and apartment residents can also access the services.

Despite setting out to achieve his aim of walking without sticks in eight weeks, Tony achieved this in just five.

They then set another goal for Tony: to be able to walk up steps so that he could deliver a reading at his local church, which he soon achieved. Around this time, Tony found that he wasn't requiring as much pain medication, and he was able to gradually reduce the quantity of painkillers that he was taking until he was medication free. His mobility continued to improve, and he can now walk into Chester town centre and go shopping on his own, carrying bags rather than walking sticks.

Commenting on this transformation, he says: "I used to think of myself as a disabled old man. This has completely changed my view of myself. I have got my life back, and I'm able to do more of the things I want to do, including becoming a more active member of the church community and joining in activities and events at the village when I like."

Tony continues with his training programme and has progressed to building functional strength through more strenuous exercises, including press-ups and pull-ups, and incorporating weights.

Spreading the word

He says that he wants to share his story so that others are aware of the potentially life-changing benefits that personalised rehabilitation programmes can have for older people experiencing pain and a loss of mobility.

"This needs to be shared. Without Louise, I would still be in pain and unable to stand up on my own. She is a true professional and remembers where you finished in the previous session, so you don't waste any time. The privacy offered by one-to-one sessions means that you can engage fully without feeling self-conscious. People need to know about this," he says.

Louise added: "Many people who develop chronic pain and mobility issues think it is an irreversible part of getting older. Tony's case is testament to the potential of exercise to help people overcome seemingly insurmountable physical challenges and lead active and fulfilling lives."

BELONG'S GOT TALENT



Musician Winston Senior

Our new 'Belong's Got Talent' column celebrates the, sometime, hidden talent from around our villages.

First up: Winston Senior.

As you enter Palm Household at Belong Morris Feinmann you can often hear the strains of a harmonica emanating from Winston Senior's bedroom or the household living area, as he entertains the other residents. Music is in Winston's blood.

Self-taught on the harmonica, which he has played virtually all of his life, he then learned how to play the flamenco guitar and took up the clarinet later in life. Even without a musical instrument, Winston would entertain people simply by strumming on anything that came to hand.

Both his mother and father were excellent singers and used to entertain at parties and family gatherings. Winston is cut from the same cloth.

His great passion was, and still is, jazz. He formed his own jazz band Gentle Jazz, which would rehearse regularly at Winston's house in preparation for charity gigs and private parties. Whenever he got the opportunity, Winston relished visits to the world-famous Ronnie Scott's jazz club in London.

An orthodontist by profession, Winston would often meet up with musical colleagues from around the world, while attending orthodontist conferences. They would entertain fellow delegates and have great fun in the process.

He and an Australian colleague once performed in Andalusia, southern Spain at the former home of world-renowned Spanish flamenco guitarist Andrés Segovia; a magnificent, cliff-top setting, overlooking the sea – quite befitting of talented musician, Winston.

Thank you Winston for the joy your music brings.

If you'd like to nominate someone for the next Belong's Got Talent feature, we'd love to hear from you. Please speak to your village's experience coordinator or email the editor at tracy.brookes@belong.org.uk

In The Spotlight: Brenda Jenkinson

June 29 marked the 80th year for Brenda Jenkinson, Belong Warrington Experience Day Support Worker. In celebration of the milestone, the village threw a surprise party. Another surprise will come in the form of this article as she reads it for the first time – congratulations Brenda, and many happy returns from all of us at Belong!

Bren, as she's known to everyone at the village, began her Belong career in 2015, starting out as a bistro assistant. Whilst she loved the interaction with customers, she quickly found herself drawn to getting involved in activities and she eventually secured a position on the experience team.

For the scouser (and honorary Warringtonian), care has always been in her blood since moving to the town in her twenties. Bren worked as a community support worker and later, committed many years of her career to social work, dedicating her people skills to various social services teams, including the support of older people.

Now, she can be found leading Belong Warrington's many and varied experiences for residents, tenants, and Experience Days customers, with her favourites including poetry reading, singing, dancing, and umpiring a game of Brenda's Bowls. Befitting of her fabulous character, she claims her passion for caring for others is down to wanting to 'make the world a brighter place'.



80 years young: Brenda cuts her birthday cake

Second family

The village's Experience Coordinator, Louise Kelly, says: "Honestly, you've never met anyone like Brenda – she's fitter than I am! She makes sure the whole room is engaged when she leads activities and she's always looking out for others. We are so privileged to have such a caring, supportive, loving person as part of our team and here's to many more years with Brenda working alongside us."

As part of the birthday girl's 'big 80', a surprise party welcomed Brenda's family and friends, including daughters Adele and Joanne, who flew in specially from Chicago. The occasion included a special video featuring well wishes messages, an abundance of flowers, a big buffet spread and of course, the birthday cake.

Brenda said: "What an amazing day! I just cannot believe all the effort that has been put in. My daughters have told me about all the hard work over the past few months to make today so special in every way. My heart is so overwhelmed with joy and happiness for the amount of time spent making today just the most wonderful day of my life."



We speak to colleagues who embody Belong's values in their day-to-day work.

In this issue, we chat with Jamie Rogers, Care Team Leader at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, who won the Dementia Care Award at the Great British Care Awards West Midlands last year and was a finalist at this year's national Dementia Care Awards.



Can you tell us about your background?

My parents were in the catering industry, and I followed in their footsteps, starting my working life at McDonald's before going on to own my own sandwich shop and catering business, which I sold to start a family just before the Covid pandemic.

During that time, I also cared for my stepdad before he sadly passed away. When I was ready to go back to work, seeing an opportunity to combine my hospitality background and the chance to care for people, I applied for the position of host at Belong.

What are your work responsibilities?

Prioritising the well-being of both colleagues and residents while leading the team in supporting residents who require 24-hour care.

I also support colleagues' professional development, helping them find satisfaction and purpose in their roles.

Do you have a favourite value?

Care from the heart. We all get one life, and my aim is to live one that I can look back on with pride and happiness. Being able to support

residents and colleagues to achieve that too is an honour.

How else do you embrace Belong values in your day-to-day work?

I strive to be a fair, caring person and thrive in a positive and uplifting atmosphere that I aim to contribute to every day.

I believe in encouraging people and helping them grow. If something isn't working, I don't give up, instead finding another way until we find what works for them.

Respecting everyone's role is also important. We couldn't provide the service we do without working together as a team.

I try to offer a supportive and non-judgmental environment, where colleagues feel comfortable confiding in me, as well as building strong, trust-based relationships with residents, and I feel this always enables better care.

Any highlights or achievements where you've put the values to good use?

The opportunity to share knowledge to create a safer and more supportive environment for both residents and colleagues.

What's your favourite thing about working at Belong?

Being able to support residents and make their day better. Any interaction with a resident, no matter how small, reinforces why I do what I do.

We're often supporting residents during the later stages of their journey, and to be part of that and help them feel valued, comfortable and cared for gives me a real sense of purpose.

What is the most challenging aspect of the job?

I'm someone who naturally likes to take the initiative, stay ahead and get things done, so it is sometimes challenging for me to implement processes that require time and can't be rushed.

Finally, what do you do to unwind after work?

I have three children, and we love spending time together outdoors, going camping, on bike rides or swimming. I'm always on the go, but that's exactly how I like it!

Music is another big part of my life. I love listening to it, and many of the residents have heard me singing around the building – some have even said that I've got the X Factor!

Volunteer Profile: Erin Yoxall



Erin (right) and Sheila

In this feature, we recognise the outstanding contributions of volunteers to the Belong community.

For Belong Crewe's Erin, what started out as a stint volunteering in the village's salon has turned into the offer of a job in her dream career.

At just 18-years old and fresh from school, she ventured into the working world by assisting salon colleagues Trulea and Marie. Erin's chance to contribute came through a voluntary internship organised between her school and Belong, affording her the chance to pursue her passion.

As part of the arrangement, joining Erin, is mentor Sheila from Grow & Achieve Together, a non-for-profit community interest company (CIC) supporting young people by promoting inclusion and independence.

After finishing the internship, Erin had aspired to study hair and beauty at college but sadly was unable to secure a course. Sheila explains: "Colleges would only allow students who could study on their own, meaning that Erin having a work coach with her wasn't an option, so we explored other avenues, instead."

Erin's dreams came true after a chat with Belong Crewe management ended up in an offer of a permanent, part-time contract, working on Mondays and Thursdays.

Love is in the hair

"I enjoy meeting people, talking to the customers and making them look beautiful," Erin shares her favourite part of her job.

Typically, she visits residents on the households and accompanies them to The Salon in the village's hub, making them feel welcome before making them their favourite drink. Learning on the job, her duties include washing and blow-drying hair, hair straightening, and assisting her colleagues in any way she can.

Erin continues: "I really enjoy using my hands in my work, and Trulea and Marie give me lots of support. I feel more confident, more independent and getting paid for doing something I enjoy and being able to buy my own things is great. Everyone is wonderful – I love it here!"

Sheila agrees. She says: "It really is a fantastic opportunity and it's great that Belong offers something like this to young people. More companies should be like Belong; this is helping to develop Erin in so many ways, as well as build her career."

A big thank you and well done to Erin (and Sheila) – we are pleased to help you achieve your career dreams and have you as part of the team.

Minibus adventures

Belong is excited to welcome two minibuses to the family. A number of our colleagues have been fully trained to operate the vehicles which are shared amongst all the villages to go wherever they please.

The investment means we have more flexibility for spontaneous trips (in addition to our many planned excursions) and customers are invited to put forward suggestions for places to go.

So far, trips have included popping out to the garden centre, visits to country houses and gardens, and even to other villages, as Belong Crewe recently welcomed Belong Wigan for an afternoon tea.

If you see us out and about, give us a wave!



Belong Crewe customers test out the new minibus



Belong Wigan customers go on tour

Chinese Dancers Make their Moves at Belong Warrington

International, intergenerational relations are at an all-time high in Warrington as young, budding entertainers show off their Chinese dance talents with a special performance for the town's older community at Belong Warrington.

Older people residing at the village were joined by others living locally for the inspiring display. Courtesy of Manchester Chinese Academy of Dance (MCAD), the 28-strong troupe twisted and twirled their way through Chinese Classical and Chinese folk dance to rousing encouragement from their audience.

The colourful spectacle proved to be a huge success, with the shimmering of traditional silk outfits capturing the imagination of June Doxey, resident at Belong Warrington. She said: "It was fantastic. I loved all the different colours and outfits."

Pat Palmer, apartment tenant at the village, added: "Amazing! You would usually pay a lot to see something like this; we're so lucky to have them here, performing for us."



Louise Kelly, experience coordinator at Belong Warrington, said: "We are honoured to host the Manchester Chinese Academy of Dance. Our customers loved it; they were truly in awe of the talents of our guests. We were pleased to extend the invite to people living locally so they could have the opportunity to enjoy the show. What a treat for the community!"

Generation Game: Macclesfield's Young and Old Come Together for Fun

Intergenerational relationships in Macclesfield are flourishing thanks to a weekly playgroup initiative designed to promote relationships between young and older people.

Generations of Fun sees children up to the age of five years (and their grown-ups) sharing in experiences with older people residing at Belong Macclesfield. The quality time features interactive storytelling, singing and making music, and arts and crafts. Many have embraced the simple pleasures of playing together with toys, enjoying snacks and getting to

know one another.

Elaine Beckingham (pictured), Belong Macclesfield customer, said: "I love the sessions because I like meeting people with children and spending time with the little ones - it's nice to borrow them for a little while."

Leading the gatherings, Anna Seaton, experience coordinator at Belong Macclesfield, said: "Generations of Fun is proving to be a real hit - we've had much laughter and creativity, and our customers have loved spending time



with our little guests. Some of them don't have grandchildren and vice versa, and so everyone is really benefiting from being in one another's company, interacting and learning. It's been wonderful to see."

Crewe Big Walk



On a very hot summer Saturday, Belong Crewe went 'on tour', to Brereton Heath Nature Reserve for their annual Big Belong Walk, raising sponsorship funds for village experiences. Customers and colleagues completed an amazing 66 miles between them, translating into over £1,000 in donations. Their hard work was rewarded with a lakeside picnic to complete the day.

Experience Coordinator, Jodie Challinor, said: "What an incredible day! A massive thank you to everyone who donated and to those who took part - it was a hot one, but spirits were high and the smiles were even brighter."

France via Didsbury: Octogenarians Embrace Language Learning



Bonjour, ça va?' is the phrase ringing in and around Didsbury as residents at Belong Morris Feinmann care village prove you're never too old to learn something new by partaking in French lessons designed to boost brain health and foster companionship.

Residents have been immersed in all things français, speaking, singing and even acting out their joie de vivre as they get to grips with a departure from their mother tongue.

Under the tuition of language teacher, Liz Syed of Languagility, the participants are tutored gently, learning via interactive games, live music, entertainment, and even adopting a touch of Parisian style, donning berets and

playing games of Pétanque, the country's version of bowls.

Colin Moss, resident at Belong Morris Feinmann, said: "I used to be bilingual, and my French had all but disappeared. Now, I have a few words I can say again. We wear berets, we sing, and we have a lot of fun. Très, très, heureux!"

Angela Luckett, Experience and Cultural Coordinator at Belong Morris Feinmann, explains more: "The goal isn't to achieve fluency; it's about a sense of achievement and the chance for collaboration, as well as stimulating our residents' senses - all to enhance their overall wellbeing. It's certainly supported their self-confidence over the past few weeks."

Crewe Pride Returns

Silver Pride, the annual celebration of LGBTQ+ life and culture specially for the over 55s, made a welcome return to Crewe in June.

Hosted by Belong Crewe, in partnership with sexual health charity, Body Positive Cheshire & North Wales and its social network, Silver Rainbows, guests of all ages were invited to the village to revel in the festivities with live entertainment from Music in Mind, sing-along with Dame Dolly, and a fashion catwalk parade competition.

Joining the event, Crewe Town Mayor, Cllr Dawn Clark, along with representatives from Crewe Police Cheshire Constabulary, and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service brought the community together for face painting, tombola and stalls, sweet treats and a barbecue.

Jodie Challinor, Experience Coordinator at Belong Crewe, said: "We're thrilled that Silver Pride has now become a regular fixture in the Crewe calendar as it's important to us that everyone can be themselves and express who they are. Many of the older community have memories of living in a society when it was illegal for them to do this and our day is designed to say you have the support of Belong Crewe; this is a safe space where everyone belongs, regardless of your age or who you love."



Our Vision and Values

Belong aspires to redefine what's possible for the wellbeing of older people, integrating services, housing and community to operate a continually improving and innovative care model.

We give our customers and colleagues a genuine voice in how we go about it.

STRONGER TOGETHER

We are here for each other and believe that every member of our community contributes to the best possible experiences and outcomes. We are united in our purpose and working together enables us to achieve more.

RESPECT FOR ALL

Honesty and openness are central to our culture. We understand everyone is an individual and encourage an inclusive environment where every voice is heard, and different perspectives are valued.

CARE FROM THE HEART

We approach every interaction with empathy, kindness and compassion.

We always seek to uplift others and create a nurturing, supportive environment. We foster a caring and vibrant community for our team and the people we support.

BE YOUR BEST

We empower others to reach their full potential. We give each other the confidence to see beyond limits, learn new skills and take control of our futures.

BETTER TOMORROW

We are constantly evolving towards a brighter future. We are not afraid to challenge the norm, explore ideas and create new opportunities. Our focus on innovation enables us to continually improve.



BELONG
VILLAGES