

BelongLife

SPRING 2023



Coronation elation: Belong celebrates the new King and Queen

See pages 8 and 9

Dementia in Verse: centre pull-out



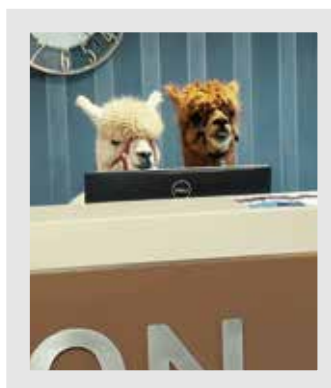
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Word from the team

This issue, chief executive Martin Rix shares highlights from the Belong community over recent months.

Spring is well and truly here, and in this issue, there are perhaps even more reasons that usual to celebrate, not least for His Majesty's coronation which saw the Belong community dress in our best to enjoy the royal festivities. Another highlight was the formation of a new choir at Belong Morris Feinmann, with months of rehearsals culminating in a stunning final performance.

We take great pleasure in awards galore, with a flurry of wins and nominations. Britannia Household at Belong Crewe took home the national Palliative Carer Award at the Great British Care Awards – a fantastic achievement. And shortlisted colleagues from a number of our villages eagerly await the outcome of their Housing with Care Awards placings, due in June.

Speaking of awards, less than a year since opening, the nursery at Belong Chester has been singled out for demonstrating the benefits of building relationships between younger and older generations, winning the International Award at the Generations Working Together Excellence Awards. Notably, our customers report that the interactions with the children are changing their lives for the better, whilst parents of the children are excited by the advances of their offspring's vocabulary, language and social and emotional skills.

Turning to awareness events which give rise to important issues close to us, we've recently commemorated Global Intergenerational Week, Dementia Action Week and National and International Nurses Day. You can find updates of all villages' activities marking these occasions on our social media channels.

Our relationship with the Bluecoat reached another milestone as the artists commissioned by Liverpool's contemporary arts centre complete their arts residencies at Belong Chester. In June, the city's Grosvenor Museum launches an exhibition of customers' work. Pop down any time over the coming months to share in the success and research outcomes of the project.

We also meet Maggie Wallace, our new Head of People, for her views on joining the Belong family, and of course, you'll also find the regular features and many more news stories we delight in sharing with you. I hope you enjoy catching up on what Belong has been up to!

Martin Rix Belong Chief Executive

International Award for Nursery in Belong

The Nursery in Belong Chester, operated by national charity Ready Generations, has been singled out amongst organisations worldwide for demonstrating the benefits of building relationships between younger and older generations, as well as sharing intergenerational best practice on an international stage.

The first fully integrated nursery within a care setting in the North West won the International Award at the Generations Working Together Excellence Awards, which celebrate learning and success in building intergenerational relationships.

The rigorous judging process assessed evidence of the positive impact of initiatives bringing different generations together, including improved health and physical and mental well-being for elders, children and their families, as well as raising awareness and understanding around ageism.

Situated at the heart of the care village, the 25-place nursery provides a range of shared spaces, facilitating both planned and spontaneous interactions, such as residents and children enjoying mealtimes, sharing stories and books and exploring nature together. The nursery and village teams work closely together to create a truly shared environment where everyone can feel part of a compassionate community and make their own valuable and unique contribution.

Examples of planned intergenerational opportunities include weekly stay-and-play sessions, a multi-generational choir, storytelling, poetry and dance workshops. Projects facilitated by partnerships with external groups, including schools, museums and arts organisations, serve to extend reach into the local community and widen participation.



Lionel Merlin-Davies, aged 4, who attends The Nursery in Belong, with the award



'Exceptional' Belong Crewe named national winners at Great British Care Awards

Compassionate Crewe carers at Belong have been announced as winners of the Palliative Carer Award at this year's Great British Care Awards (GBCAs), recognising their outstanding work supporting their customers during their end of life, as well as in their sensitivity meeting the needs of family members.

Led by Fern Yarnwood, lead senior support worker, the dedicated ten strong team at the not-for-profit dementia specialist's Britannia House took home the prestigious national award, having already won the closely fought North West regional distinction.

Speaking of their decision, the judging panel comprising independent industry professionals, said: "The team go above and beyond to ensure their end-of-life care is the best it can be." Providing examples, including Britannia's thoughtful memory boxes full of photos and a signed card to families when their loved one has passed, they continued: "These little steps make their palliative care exceptional, and much deserving of this accolade."

The colleagues work within one of six 'households' at Belong Crewe, with each providing 24-hour care to small cohorts of residents who share open plan kitchen, dining and living spaces, creating family-sized communities in the wider village.

Carers meet their needs, including specialist dementia and nursing care, whilst supporting them to live an active later life with a comprehensive programme of activities and experiences.

This year, the award category is sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) as it continues to help fill vacancies across the adult social care sector and encourage people to explore the many rewarding roles within care at leading providers, like Belong.

Sharon Haigh, community support worker at the organisation's Belong at Home service, also made the national finals shortlist for the Home Care Worker award. Meanwhile, a number of the Belong Crewe colleagues achieved regional shortlisting places for awards in dementia care, nursing, and activity provision.



The Britannia team at Belong Crewe, recipients of the national Palliative Carer Award, Great British Care Awards 2023:

- Fern Yarnwood, lead senior support worker
- Lauren Drummond
- Chelsea Hinett
- Abbey Mason
- Jackie May
- Paige O'Neil
- Louise Pepper
- Kelsie Proudlove
- Darren Robinson
- Karen Taylor

Pictured: Support workers at Belong Crewe celebrate their Great British Care Awards national win.

Cheryl Davies, general manager at Belong Crewe, said: "We're thrilled for the Britannia team for being named Palliative Carer of the year. As the judges recognised, their work helping our customers to live comfortably and with dignity at their end of their lives, really is truly exceptional – congratulations!"

Last year, Belong Crewe was reaccredited the Gold Standards Framework Platinum status for end-of-life care. It is one of only two care providers in Cheshire to hold the certification – the other being sister village, Belong Macclesfield.

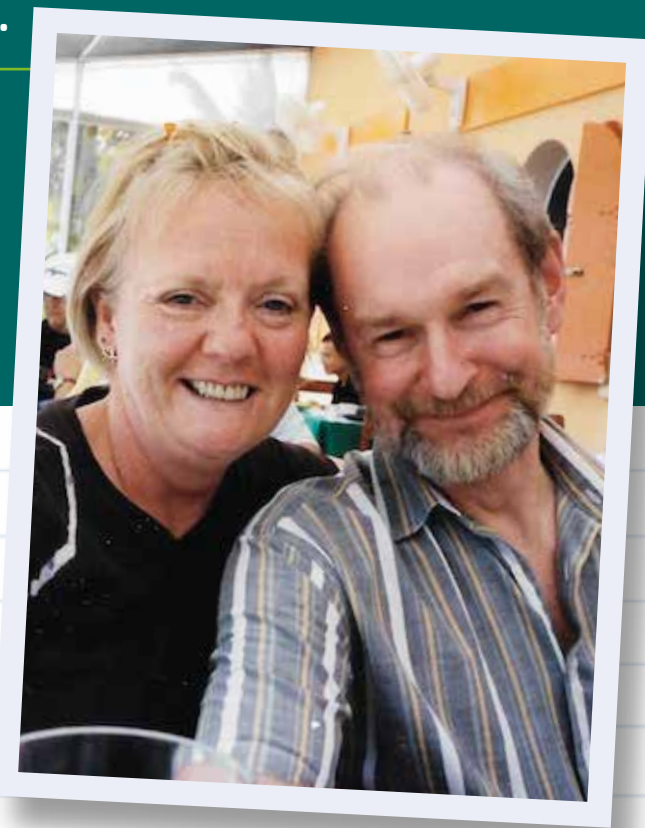


Belong Crewe threw a special party for the entire village to celebrate Britannia's award

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 spoke to **Kevin Dillon**, husband of the late Sheila Dillon, who lived on Cunningham House, Belong Warrington. He shares a frank and touching account of his wife's move to the village.



Pictured: Kevin Dillon, pictured with his wife, Sheila.
friendly atmosphere. This clinched it for us."

Soon, the family were visiting regularly, offering the chance for respite for Kevin, and the opportunity for Sheila to become more comfortable with her new surroundings as she began making friends with the household residents.

The big day

"When moving in day came, I was really stressed," Kevin tells us. "They said, 'Let's enjoy a coffee in a private room,' and after, I told Sheila I had some documents to complete and so I slipped out, leaving her with her new friends. I phoned later and found she'd settled in well. I'd been expecting the worst, but I got the best.

"Even though she's no longer with us, I'm pleased we made that initial contact with Belong's Admiral Nurses – Sheila was very happy at Belong Warrington and things could have been so different."

"There's just too much to do on your own. And this is where the Admiral Nurses come in."

Belong's Admiral Nurses – Caroline Clifton and Bridget Lawler – provide a dedicated dementia nurse service available through the organisation's partnership with charity, Dementia UK, offering advice and the confidence to help families and their loved ones manage their future.

Kevin continues: "Caroline came round to our house for a chat, and she was very charming, helpful and attentive. Seeking advice is definitely the top priority for anyone caring for a loved one. You cannot consume all the information needed to build an action plan – there's just too much to do on your own. And this is where the Admiral Nurses come in."

Preparing for the move

When the time came for a permanent home for Sheila, the priorities were a modern building with nice staff and a good reputation, and Kevin tells us that Belong Warrington 'ticked all the boxes'. He says: "Caroline told us about how Belong operate and discussed the care levels that were required. It was a great enlightenment and very reassuring."

Having devised a plan to introduce the village to Sheila, the family visited for a tour with the general manager, followed by a coffee and a chance to meet the team, as well as participate in the activities. Kevin recalls: "I remember thinking how pleasant it was; the people, the décor. Sheila was very relaxed, very content with the

More information about Belong Admiral Nurses can be found at <https://www.belong.org.uk/admiral-nurse-service>

Stories bring generations together at Belong



Pictured: nursery children gathered round with their parents and care village residents for the interactive storytelling session.

Generations came together for an inclusive storytelling session led by internationally acclaimed performance storyteller, Richard O'Neill, assembling around a virtual camp fire, complete with tipi and fairy lights, at the Nursery in Belong, at Belong Chester.

The audience ranged in age from eight weeks to 92 years and comprised care village residents, nursery children, their parents and siblings. The nursery is run by national charity Ready Generations, working in partnership with Belong to ensure a fully integrated approach to creating intergenerational experiences and opportunities.

The stories centred around the adventures of three wooden puppets carved by Richard himself. After delighting audiences with tales of their adventures, children and older people were invited to work together to make their own puppets from twigs and scraps of material, and tell stories about their creations. They then paraded their creations around the care village, led by a drummer.

Storytelling heritage

Richard learned his craft growing up in a traditional, nomadic Romani family with a rich storytelling culture while travelling around the North of England and Scotland. He performs for a diverse range of audiences, including schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, charities and companies, as well as teaching storytelling skills to educators and other professionals.

As the author of several children's storybooks, he has won awards in the UK, Europe and USA, including being awarded National Literacy Hero status. A traditional wood carver, Richard makes all of his own props for his original stories.

Learning from one another

Doreen Barnes, apartment tenant at Belong Chester, who attended the storytelling session said: "It was a lovely time with the children watching their imagination come to life. Storytelling is an age-old way of communicating that will never die. We learn and gain new skills from people's

stories, helping us to relate to others and make sense of the world."

Commenting on the intergenerational storytelling session and the benefits for participants, Ruth Sandbach, Nursery Manager at the Nursery in Belong, said: "Richard's storytelling was really well received by both children and older generations, and the venue was full. The nursery has been established to encourage connections and friendships between generations, and storytelling is a key part of helping relationships to flourish. Richard is a keen supporter of the nursery and visits us regularly with his puppet friends to tell stories and hear the fabulous stories our children and older people create together."



"It was a lovely time with the children watching their imagination come to life."
- Doreen Barnes



Memory Lane...

For this issue's Memory Lane we find out about the remarkable life, to date, of Belong Morris Feinmann household resident, Peter Mittler (93). His wife, Penny, tells us about his distinguished career and his role championing the rights of people living with dementia.

At age eight, Vienna-born Peter was forced to flee Nazi-occupied Austria following the devastation of Kristallnacht, 'Night of Broken Glass', which saw violent anti-Jewish demonstrations across the continent, ahead of the commencement of World War II.

Having settled in London, he was later reunited with his parents and moved to Liverpool where he pursued his education at Merchant Taylors School, before serving in the armed forces. Upon completion, he initially read history at Cambridge University and with the option to change courses, he switched to psychology. It was after graduating Peter found his grounding in the social sciences, training as an apprentice clinical psychologist in Oxford and working in the NHS for almost a decade.

In 1963, Peter moved into academia, becoming a lecturer in child development at London University and five years later, relocated to Manchester to take up post as the founding director of the pioneering Hester Adrian Research Centre. In 1973, he became Professor of Special Needs Education at Manchester University.

Couple status

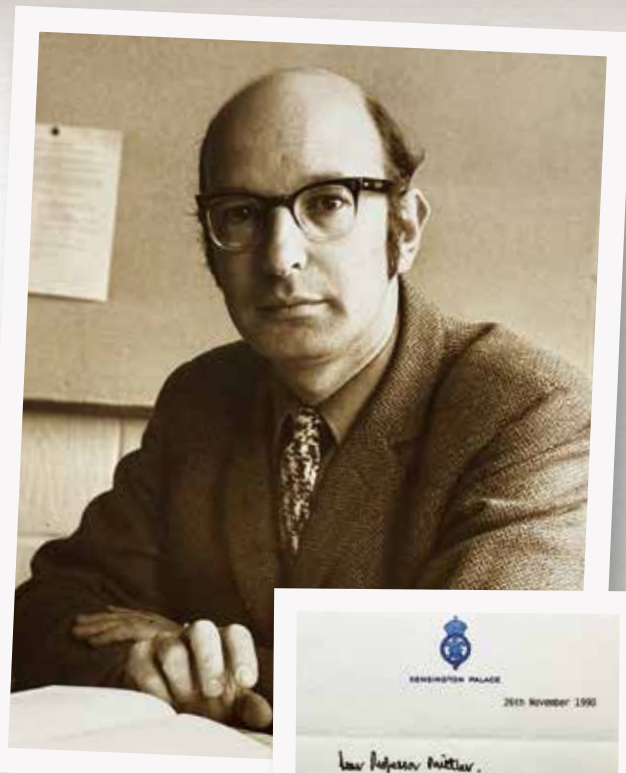
Penny and Peter first met at a teacher training class in Bolton, where he was giving a speech to probationary teachers. She tells us: "I was blown away by the intelligence of the man. His ability to articulate big ideas and make them accessible to everyone is his greatest attribute." The pair would find themselves working together again when Peter oversaw Penny's Master of Philosophy at the University of Manchester, before she moved down south.

It was only after a chance meeting years later that a spark of a closer relationship blossomed. In summer 1994, they bumped into one another in York at a government roadshow for their latest legislation in relation to special education needs.

Penny and Peter with his 1981 Queen's Birthday Honours CBE. (Courtesy of Gwen Riley Jones)



Peter and his My Voice Book, with Carolyn Ball, Belong Morris Feinmann general manager



Peter at work at Manchester University, 1971

A year later, they moved in together. By this time, they were semi-retired, though continuing to work as voluntary consultants, and travelling extensively, with highlights including Tunisia, Madagascar, Lesotho, and a year in Hong Kong. Throughout his academic career, Peter led and contributed to over 90 papers, including renowned general medical journal, The Lancet.

Recent times

Peter was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2006, though Penny tells us it was a decade before a noticeable difference in his quality of life. "He became committed all over again to advocating and bringing all his experience and skill to as many as he could," she says. His last major speech, the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, Toronto 2016, saw Peter share his personal experiences as he took up the role as keynote speaker.

Earlier this year, he was presented with his My Voice Book, entitled 'Let No one be Excluded: A Life Dedicated to Human Rights for All.' The project, developed with the help of Jewish social care charity, The Fed, is not dissimilar to the famous big red book, as seen in the 'This is Your Life' television programme.

Penny finishes: "He would want everyone to know that when receiving a diagnosis, your family also receives a diagnosis – as I'm sure many Belong Life readers will be aware. However, Peter's work proves that though the difficulties and challenges should not be underestimated, it is not the end, and they need not dominate your life. He'd also want to say you can continue to do the things you enjoy, whilst finding new things in your life."



Thank you letter for Peter's advisory work. Charles, then Prince of Wales. Kensington Palace, 1990.



Young dancers trip the light fantastic for Wiganers

As singers and musicians, impressionists and magicians return to our television screens, young dancers have been proving that Wigan's 'got talent', with their hard work and creative flair starring in their own show for the town's older community at Belong Wigan.

Twisting, twirling, and tapping their way to impress their 'judges', the twinkle toes, aged three upwards, displayed an array of ballet, modern, and contemporary routines before finding themselves on the receiving end of rousing applause from their audience. Later, they enjoyed a glimpse of fame, signing autographs and taking questions at the aftershow party.

Welcoming Belong at Home customers

Community support workers from Belong at Home, which provides a domiciliary care service to people in the wider community, as well as those living in the village's independent living apartments, invited the talent from KAM Performing Arts Academy to entertain customers with the unforgettable experience.

The showcase turned out to be a huge success, with one relative commenting: "It was amazing! Mum absolutely loved it." Another added: "Thank you, Belong, for arranging this; it meant our dad could watch his granddaughters perform again."

“Thank you, Belong, for arranging this; it meant our dad could watch his granddaughters perform again.”

Sophie Walls, area manager at Belong at Home Wigan provides more detail: "Our customers thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It's our job to offer them a helping hand in their homes and facilitate enjoyable experiences and this time, it's thanks to the children and their beautiful, confident performances – they were superstars!"

Magic and Memories

Karina Matuszewski, certified dance teacher at KAM Performing Arts Academy, added: "To hear the Belong audience's 'oohs' and 'wows' was an amazing feeling. Our girls worked their socks off and sparkled on stage so much that we've been asked back again. A truly magical day for all."

Sophie continued: "We're pleased to host this community get together and help the performers grow their confidence; our customers loved offering their own advice and memories of their dance days. I'd say it was golden buzzers all round for our guests."

Coronation elation: Belong celebrates the new King and Queen

As King Charles III and Queen Camilla ascended to the throne, customers and families at Belong marked the historic occasion with coronation extravaganzas to remember.

Customers at our villages and Belong at Home dressed in their best to enjoy the momentous gatherings which transported them back to parties of the past, with live entertainment, food, bubbly and the sharing of stories from previous royal festivities conjuring happy memories of days gone by.

Other highlights alongside the many helpings of Victoria sponge cake included royal quizzes and reminiscence sessions, bake-offs and fairground games. Young friends from local schools paid visits for intergenerational arts sessions and musical performances, following weeks of preparation which saw customers designing their own flags, bunting and decorations to adorn their homes.

For the big moment itself, Union Jacks were waved as Belong customers cheered on the royals from their respective in-house entertainment venues, before tucking into a fancy banquet inspired by British cuisine classics and accompanied by a tipple or two. Later, more gala festivities followed, including music and dancing and a joyful atmosphere.

Sue Goldsmith, chief operating officer at Belong said: "Our customers have many fond memories of past royal occasions, including Queen Elizabeth II's coronation 70 years ago, so we took the lead from what they wanted to see, bringing to life their ideas for how to celebrate. The result was right royal knees-ups across our villages, inspired by their memories, infused with modern take – a fantastic party that will be talked about for years to come!"

Last year, Belong was chosen to feature in the official publication of Her Majesty The Queen: The Official Platinum Jubilee Pageant Album. The book commends outstanding individuals and organisations from across the country and the Commonwealth that have had an impact on life in the UK during the seven decades of the late Queen Elizabeth II's reign. All Belong villages have a copy for everyone to enjoy – speak to a member of the team to take a look.

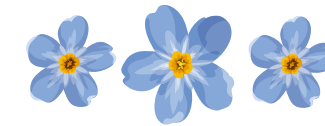




For Dementia Action Week 2023, Belong asked colleagues, customers and family to turn to verse to share the lived experience of people with dementia, their loved ones and the people around them. We are delighted to publish some of the moving contributions we received, and we would like to thank all the brave and talented members of our community who have shared their poems with us.



Today is what matters to me



We go to the ballet and sit in the stalls.
The curtain rises and the crowds roar.

The music starts as they enter the stage.
I turn to look at you and watch you amazed.

I ask if you're ok as I catch your eye.
You give me a nod, with your eyes open wide.

I sit and I watch you as you stare right ahead.
You're lost in the moment, no words to be said.

The interval comes and I get us an ice-cream.
We chat and we laugh at what we've just seen.

The show starts again and you're lost in a trance.
I can see your feet tap, like you're starting to dance.

I take you back home and tuck you in bed.
You thank me again for the great time we had.

As I walk out the door and I bid you goodnight.
I know that tomorrow you would have forgotten tonight.

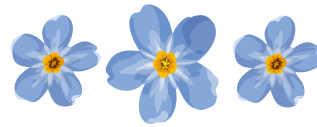
That won't stop what we're doing day after day.
Joy, fun and laughter, let's do it this way.

So come what tomorrow, who cares what that may be.
Let's celebrate today just you and me.

By Donna Woolrich, Community Support Worker, Belong at Home Crewe.



Where is my husband?



Where has my husband gone?
It seems like only yesterday
he was here
but now he's gone away.

What has happened to his mind
he used to be so kind
now the air is blue
with words I didn't even know he knew.

He used to call me sweetheart everyday
now his favourite thing to say is
"your bloody voice grates on my nerves."

We are not mates anymore
but I still love him so
I am now his carer
but I want to be more.

I can't get through
to his new mind
he used to be so kind.



*By Kath Bateman, Age 77 (pictured), Apartment
Tenant, Belong Wigan*

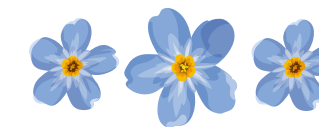
He used to shower everyday
now it's a mean feat
to even wash his feet.
He will scream and shout
"let me out, let me out"
"I had a shower yesterday."

What can I say?
just agree with him I'm told
but the man I hold in my arms
is not my husband.

Where has my husband gone?
I miss him every day.



Just where I belong



Where does one belong?

Where playing a piano, or singing a song
is celebrated as a skill and a strength that's so strong.
Where Saturday scrabble club run by our Mary
is intellectually engaging and not at all scary.
50 pence entry for experience day guests
pays for the tea and the biscuits,
while your mind's put to the test.

Whether Crewe born and bred, or raised in Leatherhead,
Lincolnshire, Lancashire or Jamaica instead.
A place where privacy and community go hand in hand,
and our caring staff really do understand.
A village where customers are free to mingle and roam,
somewhere you are someone, and a face that is known.

One of the best things about this place is,
the singing and dancing that puts smiles on our faces.
My days are filled with happiness and joy,
as much as I had when I was a boy.
I go home feeling younger than when I arrived,
I feel so energetic, so vibrant, so alive.

Home is where the heart is,
and my heart has found a home.
New friends, new hobbies and interests,
where I never feel alone.
Come and join us and don't wait too long,
to a place that I feel, just where I belong.

By Gareth Williams

Pictured: Members of the Belong Crewe poetry club



Alpacas say 'hello' to Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme residents

Residents at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme have enjoyed a springtime start to remember with a special surprise in the form of a pair of alpacas popping in for a meet-and-greet, and a stint working in the reception.

Teddy and Carlos, both aged four, made themselves at home at the village, mingling with their hosts, taking tea in the onsite bistro and learning about the town's history with a tour of the integrated Belong Heritage Gallery. They then took-up a front-of-house post, offering a warm welcome to visitors.

The furry guests quickly forged friendships with Belong's customers and colleagues who provided an abundance of love and cuddles whilst taking the opportunity to ask their owners questions and provide their own amusing tales of past antics involving animals.

Customer verdict

Resident Margaret Paling, 98, said: "They're beautiful, aren't they?" and Janet Boulton, 89, added: "Oh, they're lovely! They're so well behaved – can they move in with us?!"

Often confused with llamas, alpacas are members of the Camelidae family and can normally found up to 5,000 meters above sea level in the heights of The Andes mountains. The animal therapy session has been made possible



Pictured: Alma Worthington



Pictured: Alpacas at Reception

thanks to Knightley Alpaca Trekking, a Staffordshire-based family business offering experiences with the South American mammal.

Emma Palin, experience coordinator at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, said: "What a fantastic afternoon we've had! To see our customers' faces light up when the alpacas came in was truly magical.



Pictured: Bob Kay and Teddy

Emotional benefits

"In previous years we've hatched our own chicks and ducks and for this Easter, we wanted another experience involving everyone; we even introduced our new friends to those who are confined to their beds. Animals provide an affectionate, sensory experience which offers emotional benefits to our customers, allowing them to feel connected in a way they might not always feel with people. It's been a great success."

The unusual visitors also attracted attention from further afield, earning the village a TV appearance on Granada Reports!

In the Spotlight: Maggie Wallace

Earlier this year, Belong welcomed Maggie Wallace as Head of People, with the remit of attracting, inspiring and retaining care's most talented people to work across our villages, Belong at Home, and central services teams.

Maggie is responsible for all aspects of HR, including recruitment, engagement and learning and development. Her priorities include addressing the recruitment challenges faced by the care sector, which she believes will be achieved by championing the social care industry and showcasing the rewarding career opportunities it provides, as well as ensuring colleagues are well supported in their roles.

Extensive expertise

She has over 30 years' experience working in HR across multiple industries, including in the care sector. Her career began in hospitality, progressing to be the regional HR manager with oversight of 16 hotels, and includes establishing the HR function of a multimedia company with 10 locations across the country, as well as a period as a freelance consultant.

She was also Head of People at the UK's leading holiday letting agencies during a time that saw the company's headcount grow from 250 to over 1000 and throughout the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Most recently, Maggie completed a six-month role at a social care company.

Championing social care

Explaining how this influenced her decision to join Belong, she said: "I was instantly struck by the incredible work of the social care industry and the amazing people who work in it. I wanted to become a champion for the people who support the most vulnerable people in society.

"I was drawn to Belong for its great reputation and unique model that places customers at the centre of everything and supports people to live



life to the full while placing an emphasis on autonomy and individuality.

I am looking forward to working with colleagues across the organisation to build on the foundations that already exist to make Belong a best-in-class employer for the social care industry."

Commenting on Maggie's appointment, Belong Chief Executive, Martin Rix added: "We are delighted to have Maggie on board at an exciting time for Belong. Her extensive experience and expertise will be invaluable as we offer our services to more people in more geographical areas."

Welcome to the Belong family, Maggie!

Care village turns chocolate factory with help of school pupils



If there's one shared love that brings people of any and all ages together, it has to be chocolate! Embracing an intergenerational experience with their primary school friends, residents at Belong Warrington transformed their home into a Willy Wonka factory by becoming chocolatiers in the name of indulging their mutual affection for confection.

The golden ticket guests, aged between 5 and 11 from Stockton Heath Primary School, were invited for an afternoon at the care village and kindly donated ingredients for use, working alongside residents to whip up sweet treats.

Year 4 pupil, Frankie Gallimore, said: "I loved it! The residents made me smile and it was great to make cakes with them. I can't wait to go back and plant

flowers with them!" Ronnie Cosgrove-Cousins from Year 1, added: "They were just like us, but older! And they loved chocolate, too!"

Pupil-led

Arranged as part of Belong's intergenerational strategy for its care villages, the initiative was led by the school's 'Art Ambassadors' – pupils of all age groups tasked with promoting creativity and voicing the arts preferences of their classmates, both at school and when networking with the community.

Their choice of edible art in the form of cake-making made the activity accessible to everyone, including Belong's residents living with dementia. Dairy-free chocoholics were also catered for!

Louise Kelly, Belong Warrington's Experience Coordinator, said: "The pupils' visit was a real joy for our customers. Intergenerational relationships form a huge part of our work supporting residents to build connections and look forward to new experiences."

Hannah Bird, teacher and Art & Design Leader at Stockton Heath Primary School, added: "The best part of school life is enjoying extraordinary activities and getting to meet new people, so it means a great deal to us that our pupils had the chance to mix with older generations and forge new friendships. This has helped them to understand and respect different stages of life and even now, they're still talking about all their new friends at Belong Warrington!"

Living the Values



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



Back row: Aaron, Jonathan, Lee, Max, Andre
Front row: Jane, Adrian, Clare

For this issue, our Exercise Department, Team of the Year finalists at the Belong Champion Awards 2022, share how they assist and enhance our customers' health and wellbeing.

How would you describe your role?

Our job is to devise personalised exercise programmes and classes using expertise, care, plus a little outside the box thinking to support customers in achieving their fitness goals, in a safe and effective approach.

– Jonathan Perrins, Belong Atherton

And how do you work together as a team?

We all have a similar mindset, which is to do the very best for customers. Working on cross-village events brings us closer together, creating a strong team bond which provides the opportunity to share knowledge, best practice and creative ideas.

– Max Gay, Belong Crewe

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Helping customers improve their quality of life, for example, becoming more mobile, getting their confidence back following a fall, or just making them laugh and have fun during a group fitness session.

– Adrian Hunt-Seviour, Belong Chester

I find it very rewarding just to receive a smile from a resident when visiting a household.

– Aaron Wilcock, Belong Warrington

Any achievements you're particularly proud of?

We have a gentleman who suffered a stroke and lost his movement in one hand and one leg. With gentle perseverance, his leg strength is returning, and now he can fasten his buckle using his hand. It can certainly be emotional to experience these wonderful moments.

– Jane Coburn, Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme

A customer moved in with a broken shoulder following a fall at home. She'd lost her confidence to walk, and having worked with her, she's back to using stairs independently and recently completed an obstacle course I designed to recreate the daily routine she would have at home.

– Lee Fletcher, Belong Wigan



Pictured: Belong Crewe Exercise Specialist, Max, with resident, Jerry.



The exercise team at the Champion awards event

Are there any challenges to overcome?

Every customer is different, therefore getting to know them personally, their background, likes and dislikes, and adopting a flexible and adaptable work ethic always helps.

– Clare Barby, Belong Morris Feinmann

What one piece of advice would you give to readers?

Come and see your Exercise Specialist for support and advice – we are here for you. And remember: Rome wasn't built in a day!

– Andre Kwiatowski, Belong Macclesfield

Stay hydrated, go for a daily walk, and keep moving!

– Belong Exercise Department team



Pictured: Belong Macclesfield Exercise Specialist, André, with resident Christine

“ We are one of the very few care providers fortunate enough to have in-house gym facilities and exercise specialists. As we grow, we are also pleased to welcome Scott Benson and Amy Hunt to our Macclesfield and Newcastle-under-Lyme teams, respectively. The team is honoured to do the job that we do, and we invite everyone to make the most of us and the facilities available. ”

– Zoe Robson, Lead Exercise Specialist



Theatre night out

When our Crewe community support worker, Donna Woolrich, sensed how much theatre lover and Belong at Home customer, Jeanne,

missed her outings to shows, she resolved to help make one happen.

After careful planning, the pair shared in the musical delights of Beyond the Barricade, a concert at the Crewe Lyceum, encompassing famous scores from West End and Broadway shows.

Jane Gabbert, Belong at Home Crewe Area Manager, said: "Jeanne had an absolutely fabulous time, dressing up and doing what she loves best. This was the second theatre trip organised by Donna, after she took Jeanne to catch a Christmas show last year, and I know she's already scouting what's on listings to see what Jeanne might like to see next. Thank you Donna!"

Pictured: Belong resident Jeanne with support worker Donna Woolrich



B's Café gets arty

Residents at Belong Macclesfield gave free reign to their artistic talents, creating this fabulous honeycomb as the backdrop to the latest B's Café.

The dementia support group is held monthly in the Bistro, and is an opportunity for people to access advice, resources and support from our skilled Admiral Nurse, Bridget Lawler.

The great outdoors

Making the most of the finer weather, residents and tenants at Belong Wigan took to the village gardens for a jovial but fiercely contested game of bowls!

Lunches al fresco have also been all the range at the village, with the community making the most of every opportunity to get out the barbecue and offer outdoor dining at The Bistro.

Pictured: Residents of Belong Wigan enjoying a game of bowls



Atherton in Bloom

After securing funding for 'Atherton in Bloom', the team at Belong Atherton have launched a major project to transform the village's gardens, balconies and outdoor spaces.

Everyone is working hard to inject the sights, sounds and smells of nature into the gardens, to create multi-sensory opportunities through herb gardens, wildlife habitats, wildflower gardens and raised beds to grow vegetables.

The 'Atherton in Bloom' project is being supported by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, volunteers and the local guides and scouts, and most importantly, our residents, tenants and relatives. Thank you!



Pictured:

Comic Relief fundraiser makes TV headlines

In March, eagle-eyed TV viewers may have spotted the Comic Relief fun at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, as the village's fundraiser featured on BBC Midlands Today news.

In the lead-up to the event, customers and colleagues created their very own Mr. Men characters – Belong Men – with their work used for t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, stickers and keyrings to sell in the bistro, raising £235 in aid of Comic Relief 2023.

Bryony Benbow, lead nurse and the project's manager, said: "Everyone really enjoyed it, and I think it got a bit competitive with the designs and the selling – everyone wants to win! Above all, it's brought everyone together, which is great. Thank you to all who have supported this worthy cause."



Pictured: Beryl Cadman (customer); Hannah Barrington-Parry (nurse); Bryony Benbow (lead nurse); Elizabeth Mayers (customer)

Meet Ivy!

Resident budgerigar made her way to The Venue where she enamored residents of Belong Warrington taking over the exercise session and sparking some impromptu pet therapy and reminiscence.

Looked after by Support Worker Callum, Ivy is an honorary member of Threlfall household, where she is a firm favourite with residents. Thanks for bringing her along Callum!



Pictured: Pat with Ivy

Pictured: Gwen with Ivy

Singing for the King



Commemorating Charles III and Camilla's coronation, Belong Morris Feinmann formed their own choir, enlisting Manchester choir master extraordinaire, Dan McDwyer, to lead the project.

Marking the occasion, The Tomforte Choir performed a merry selection of songs for family and friends, including God Save the King, an ABBA medley, and They Can't Take That Away from Me (one of His Majesty's favourites!).

The choir was made possible and is named in the memory of the late Tom Einstein, a member of the Belong community whose father was one of the founding members of the original Morris Feinmann Home.

Angela Lockett, religious and cultural coordinator, said: "I think our customers are the most engaged I've ever seen. Many may not recall the previous week's rehearsal but when they come, everything just clicks; they remember what we're doing, the words and the melodies. Thanks to our new best friend, Dan, dementia left the room for an hour – it's remarkable."

Pictured: Dan McDwyer, with Elaine Newman (Tom's partner) and Angela Lockett (back row) and customers Jan and Val (front row)



Belong launches dementia cafés to support local communities

Our new dementia cafés offer a warm and welcoming space for those living with dementia, and their loved ones, and provide a valuable support network for local people in the communities they serve.

B's Café is set to place regularly at Belong's eight care villages, giving guests the opportunity to enjoy a range of experiences while accessing support and forming new friendships at the sessions. The programme includes arts and crafts workshops, pet therapy, specialist exercise classes and visits from musical performers.

Also on-hand, Belong Admiral Nurses provide a dedicated dementia nurse service available through the organisation's partnership with another charity, Dementia UK, offering advice and the confidence to help individuals and their loved ones manage a future living with dementia.

B's Café takes place regularly at Belong villages across the North West and Midlands. For more information and dates/times, contact your local village or email: enquiries@belong.org.uk.

