

Social Impact Report 2022-23





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The front cover photograph of resident, Bill, reading with Julian was taken at Belong Chester, and is provided courtesy of our nursery partner, Ready Generations.

Chair's report



It has always been a privilege to serve as a member of the Belong Board and never more so than in this, my first year in post as Chair. It has been a momentous year for so many reasons and it is an honour to be able to share the many highlights in this report.

As a not-for-profit organisation, social impact is very much the *raison d'être* of Belong and our villages were launched with a vision to innovate, transform lives for people with dementia and model high quality care for older people more broadly. All surpluses are reinvested into producing better outcomes for people in the communities where we operate, whether through investment in our people, technologies, services or the built environment.

Our social impact report sets out to portray how we have achieved this over the past year, looking at the lives we have changed, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Through exercise, the arts, music, intergenerational living and progressive approaches to dementia, nursing and home care, we have continued to positively impact the lives of those living in our villages and in the wider community.

Indeed, the vision behind the village model has always been very much about acting as a hub for dementia support in our local areas, offering high quality community services such as home care, day care, our Admiral Nurse service and our specialist exercise and rehabilitation service. Beyond this, our village centre facilities are always open to the public and available for hire by local community groups and we proactively design, run and promote a vibrant events programme to the wider community.

One of the most high profile events of the year was the opening of Belong Chester in July 2022, the first Belong village to feature a children's nursery and offer a truly intergenerational living experience for those residents who wish to get involved in shared experiences and opportunities.

This exciting initiative is operated by our partners, the national charity and early years experts, Ready Generations, with whom Belong had been collaborating closely for a number of years in preparation for the launch of the Nursery in Belong Chester.

We are delighted that this groundwork has paid dividends and the nursery is already winning national and international acclaim in both the early years and social care sectors. Notable impacts include more advanced development in children's communication skills, while colleagues have noted the benefits for residents' wellbeing. You can read more about this pioneering project in our report.

The opening came as we embarked on a new era in Belong under our new chief executive, Martin Rix. I would like to personally extend both welcome and thanks to Martin, who joined Belong from Norse Care in April 2022, and whose impact is already being felt across the organisation. His dedication to ensuring the best possible outcomes for our customers and the best working environment for our colleagues are the guiding lights by which he is moving the organisation forward, and his first year is one which has seen a number of operational strategies launched to drive excellence and improvement in all that we do.


















The past year also saw Susan Goldsmith join the executive team, promoted to the role of Chief Operating Officer following Stacey McCann's retirement. Along with Chief Finance Officer, Chris Hughes, Martin and Sue have established a strengthened senior management team which includes newly created posts for Head of Dementia and Care Quality and Head of People.

The organisation has continued to invest in people at every level, through enhanced remuneration, training, recognition and career development opportunities, all designed to enable us to attract, retain and develop a high calibre workforce, as we look to maintain and extend our position at the forefront of the social care sector.


Robert Armstrong
Chair of the Belong Board

Year in numbers

2022/23 finally saw us start to put some distance between the present and the pandemic, as we emerged from lockdowns, re-opened our bistros to the public, restored our drop-in visiting policy, removed masks and relaunched our community services.

	Belong 2021/22	Belong 2022/23
 Number of household residents	760	859
 Number of Belong at Home customers	276	278
 Number of hours of home care	57,000	54,566
 Number of apartment tenants	186	221
 Number of Experience Days provided	262	2,773
 Number of people who accessed Belong's Admiral Nurse service	162	214
 Number of community groups regularly accessing our villages	N/A*	95
 Percentage of household customers living with dementia	72%	73%
 Percentage of customers receiving a nursing service	40%	41%
 Average household customer age	86	86
 Occupancy in Belong households	92.9%**	94.9%
 Average fee rate per week	£1,196	£1,289
 Percentage self-funding customers	65%	64%
 Percentage of customers publicly funded in households	35%	36%
 Number of household residents subsidised	N/A†	45
 Number of jobs created	11	67
 Average pay increase	8%	5%

* No figures for 2021/22 due to Covid-19 impact on visiting. ** Average UK Care Home occupancy in 2021/22 was 79.4% according to the Knight Frank 2022 Care Homes Trading Performance Review. † This is a new measure, recorded from 2022/23.

Quality focus

The primary driver for Belong is the provision of high quality support, both for residents in our villages and the wider community. We measure this through a range of indicators.

Care Quality Commission Ratings

- Six Belong villages are rated at least *Good* by CQC, including three villages (Belong Atherton, Belong Crewe and Belong Wigan) rated *Outstanding*.
- One village (Belong Chester, which opened in July 2022) has yet to be rated.
- One village (Belong Warrington) was assessed as *Requires Improvement* (see information panel).
- All six Belong at Home services are rated at least *Good* by CQC, including one service which is rated *Outstanding*.

Customer reviews



9.8 Average review score on carehome.co.uk

In 2022, Belong was once again rated in the Top 20 care home groups (small providers) by carehome.co.uk based on independently verified customer reviews.

Belong Morris Feinmann and Belong Atherton were also placed in the Top 20 care homes for their area.



9.8 Average review score on homecare.co.uk

In 2022, Belong at Home was once again rated in the Top 20 home care groups by homecare.co.uk based on independently verified customer reviews.

Belong at Home Newcastle-under-Lyme and Belong at Home Warrington were also placed in the Top 20 home care providers in their respective areas.

31% of inspected services rated **OUTSTANDING**

62% of inspected services rated **GOOD**

Driving improvement at Belong Warrington

Belong Warrington's inspection in October 2022 disappointingly saw the village rated as 'Requires Improvement' after recommendations were made in two of the five measures assessed.

The report acknowledged that changes to leadership had already been made and improvements were being evidenced, which the inspector wanted to see sustained and embedded over a period of time before re-assessing the overall village rating.

The new leadership team has been proactive in managing audits and recruitment to address the findings; we hope to see the improvements reflected in the outcome of our next inspection.

Awards

2022/23 saw Belong distinguished in a number of prestigious national and local awards.

Gold Standards Framework

Four villages were awarded the *Platinum* accreditation in the Gold Standards Framework based on near-perfect scores in their assessments for the provision of high quality end-of-life care. **Belong Atherton, Belong Crewe, Belong Macclesfield** and **Belong Wigan** all achieved the accolade, with Crewe and Macclesfield being the only locations in East Cheshire to do so.



Great British Care Awards 2023



The Britannia Team at Belong Crewe earned national distinction at the **Great British Care Awards 2023**, winning the **Palliative Care Award**, a title

they first earned at the North West regional heats the previous autumn. Judges said: “The team go above and beyond to ensure their end-of-life care is the best it can be,” describing it as “exceptional and much deserving of this accolade.”



Great North West Care Awards

Belong at Home Wigan Community Support Worker, **Sharon Haigh**, won **Home Care Worker of the Year** at the Great North West Care Awards. The judges commented: “Sharon epitomises the characteristics of a great carer. She is compassionate, has a fun personality and puts a smile on people’s faces. Sharon really loves her job, and that passion and commitment shines through. I would want Sharon to care for a member of my family!”



NAPA Award for the Year of Creativity

Belong's arts strategy saw **Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme** recognised with a **National Activity Providers Association (NAPA)** award for the **We Belong Together** project devised through Belong's partnership with Liverpool's contemporary arts centre, the Bluecoat.

Judges were impressed by the increased wellbeing experienced by those involved and by Belong's use of creativity and arts as part of its approach to dementia care. They praised the village team as "truly dedicated to thinking creatively, trying new things and involving everyone, every day."



Wigan Palliative and End-of-Life Care Awards

Belong Atherton was recognised with wins in three categories at these highly regarded local awards (formerly the Wigan and Leigh Hospice Awards). Lead Nurse, **Jemma Sharratt**, won **Nurse of the Year**, Registered Nurse, **Paul Woodcock**, took home the **Peer-Nominated Award** and **Belong Atherton** was crowned the **Most Innovative Setting** award.



Belong featured in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Album

Belong's credentials for innovation were recognised as part of the celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II, when the organisation was selected to feature in the official album alongside other organisations selected for their exceptional contributions to UK society and culture in the past 70 years.



Belong at Home

Belong at Home has continued to expand, bringing Belong's high standards of support to people living in their own homes in the areas where we operate. This year, the service launched in Chester, in tandem with the opening of the new village in the city.



Andrew Shield appointed Business Manager

Growth of our home care service continues to be a strategic priority for the organisation and a key way in which we can impact the lives of more and more people in our areas. Promoted from his previous post as Area Manager for Warrington, Andy brings a wealth of experience to the role, having worked for Belong at Home since its launch in 2009.

Case study: Unforgettable experience for Peter

For devoted Wigan Warriors supporter, Peter Adshead, what he expected to be a regular visit to watch his rugby team in action turned out to be the trip of a lifetime when the 74-year-old was met with a meet-and-greet with his heroes – all thanks to his team of support workers and companions from Belong at Home and St Cuthbert's amateur rugby club.

Having watched the local rugby league legends compete their way to another stunning league match victory at the DW Stadium, Peter had the chance to personally congratulate the team, including favourite players, props, Liam Byrne and

Ethan Havard. Adding to the occasion's excitement, the cherry (and whites) on top was the invitation to see up-close the Challenge Cup, the knockout competition trophy won by the club for a record 20th time, in the year.

Belong at Home Atherton Community Support Worker, Paula, accompanied Peter to the match as part of her role. She explains: "I enjoyed doing something special with Peter. Personal care and help around the home are big parts of my job but it's also about being a friend and doing fun things together – it really meant a lot to him, and for me, having the opportunity to go to the match with him and see him having fun is what makes work very rewarding."



"The day out was just wonderful."

Peter Adshead with Liam Byrne

Our people

Any social impact we have is very much down to our people and we continue to prioritise investment in our workforce, in line with our not-for-profit status.

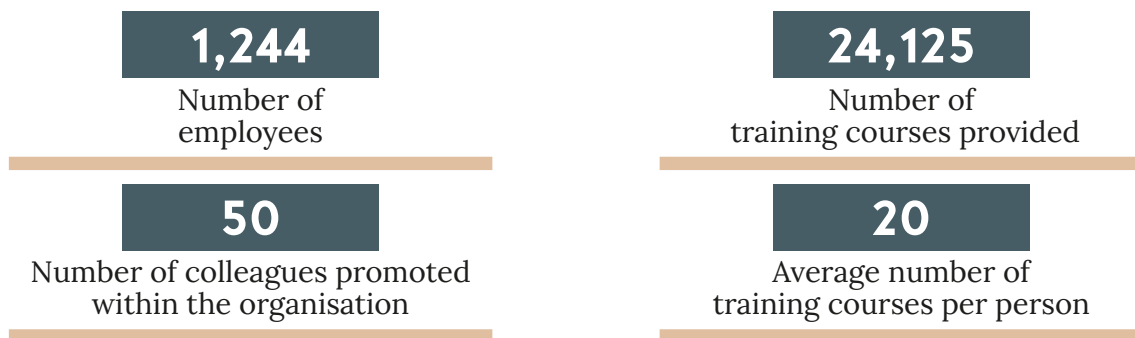


Belong is a Gold Investor in People - an accolade which puts us in the top 15% of organisations. Over the year, we have continued to increase our focus on rewarding our people in a range of ways.

Investing in people




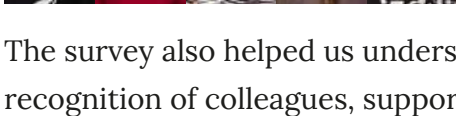
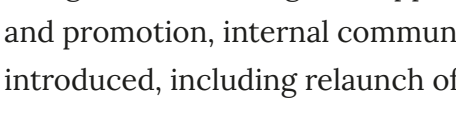
By April 2023, the minimum hourly rate of pay in Belong had increased to £10.90. This took all colleague remuneration to the new Real Living Wage or above and represents a 7.4% increase for all Band 1 employees since April 2022. With the context of rising living costs, part of this pay award was brought forward to October 2022, when a number of other measures were introduced to help colleagues earn additional income and access greater discounts.

Key stats 2022/23



Colleague survey results

Our people survey highlighted a number of positives in working for Belong, not least the pride colleagues take in their work and its quality. The highest scores (out of a maximum of 5) included:

	<i>I know what is expected of me</i>	4.5
	<i>I feel we give effective support and care for those people living with dementia</i>	4.2
	<i>I feel we look after residents to a high standard</i>	4.2
	<i>I feel I am given the right level of training</i>	4.1
	<i>I feel I work as part of a good team</i>	4.1

The survey also helped us understand which areas demanded greater focus. These included recognition of colleagues, support for wellbeing, opportunities for learning, development and promotion, internal communication and recruitment. A number of initiatives have been introduced, including relaunch of the *We Belong* employee forum, a review of the Employee Assistance Programme and the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders in the workplace.

Case study: Lead Senior Support Worker Paige O'Neill

For Paige O'Neill, a self-confessed lack of confidence meant career ambitions couldn't be fully realised, that is, until Belong Crewe colleagues helped her to recognise her potential. Six years since joining as a support worker, she now oversees colleagues' work whilst nurturing their development.

Paige's motivation for a career in care came from the sad loss of her mother, whose experience at another operator fell short of expectations. "It wasn't good, to say the least," Paige begins. "I remember thinking, 'I could do better,' though I didn't have much confidence in my abilities."

"They brought out things in me I already knew were there."

Joining Belong, however, enabled her to flourish, thanks to the encouragement and belief of senior colleagues and the village's dedicated practice development

facilitator. "They provided the assurance I needed by creating a plan to grow my knowledge and skills, based on the potential they could see," Paige continues. "They brought out things in me I already knew were there."

Equipped with a newly found confidence to develop of her own accord, earlier this year, she was promoted again. "Our registered CQC support manager informed me of a senior opportunity and shared the role specification. I asked, 'Could I do all that?' and she said, 'You already do!' It turns out, I'd self-taught many of the advanced duties without even realising!"

Now, working in a 'flexi' role, Paige leads support workers' day-to-day work across the village's six households, whilst upskilling them in new abilities, such as administering medication, in turn gaining her the nickname, 'The Med Queen,' from her peers.

Sharing her favourite thing about her job, Paige concludes: "I love making customers' days better; I'd happily spend all my time with them if I could. Today is mainly desk work but I'm meeting a customer for lunch in The Bistro. Making them happy, supporting them and their families, building relationships – this is what I enjoy most."



Award-winning

As an indication of just how far Paige has come, she was recently a member of the Belong Crewe team interviewed for a 2023 National Dementia Care Award after the village was shortlisted for Outstanding Dignity and Respect in Dementia Care.

They clearly impressed the judges as they went on to win the accolade.

Paige (right) pictured here accepting the trophy with colleague Stacey Wright.

Diversity & inclusion

Respect is one of Belong's core values and it takes seriously the imperative to create an environment where everyone feels confident and comfortable in their own skin, regardless of ethnicity, gender or background.

Belong Crewe has run its own Silver Pride events for a number of years, and for 2023, NAPA (National Activity Providers Association) has taken up the mantle, creating a national Silver Pride event that all care homes can get behind. Crewe's event has continued to grow in terms of wider community involvement and outreach.



Case study: Samantha Wolsey

For one person, Belong's approach to care has proven to be literally life-changing. Samantha Wolsey, 68, moved into one of Belong Wigan's independent living apartments five years ago, presenting as 'Billy'. Discerning the team's attitudes and the culture championed by Belong, she finally felt comfortable to share who she is with the world.

Samantha grew up in a largely conservative Britain and, as a young child, her father took her to a psychologist for conversion therapy treatment where she was tied to a bed with straps to administer electric shocks to her body. In adulthood and working as a builder, she continued to present as male, not quite finding the courage to present as she wanted to.



She recalls: "I would dress in clothes designed for women in private but never in public – the first time everyone saw the real me was at Belong Wigan. I was on the way to a fancy dress party and joined everyone in the garden for a pre-party drink. We were all laughing and joking about me wearing a dress and something in me felt ready to tell them, 'This is me.' So, I did."

Belong responded by proposing a celebratory party, bringing everyone together to commend Samantha's courage and share in her happy news. Charlene Frodsham, Experience Co-ordinator at Belong Wigan, said: "When she told us, we were surprised but everyone was keen to support. At her party, Samantha said with tears in her eyes: 'I didn't expect all this.' We couldn't be prouder of her and we hope her story inspires others."

Champion Awards



In 2022, we relaunched the Champion Awards post-pandemic, giving us the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the many achievements of colleagues in Belong villages and in Belong at Home.



Colleagues were presented with their trophies at a ceremony hosted at Peckforton Castle and attended by Belong teams from across Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Staffordshire.

With over 300 nominations from across Belong, the winners in 10 categories were determined by an independent judging panel from Dementia UK, the National Care Forum, Skills for Care, The Bluecoat,

Ready Generations and Total People, as well as Belong customers, who conducted a series of interviews as part of the rigorous assessment process.

Belong's Chief Executive, Martin Rix, said: "It was a fantastic evening celebrating our colleagues' hard work and success, and a fitting way to recognise their achievements."

Chester opening

We opened our most innovative care village to date in Belong Chester in July 2022; an ambitious development which is the first older people's care setting in the UK to include a fully integrated children's research nursery, where children and residents come together on a daily basis to have fun learning and playing together.



Meeting needs in the city

Village services have proved extremely popular leading to high demand.

- More than 75% of apartments were reserved prior to opening and all 23 were filled within three months
- Household move-ins are on track, with 46% occupancy (33 residents) within 12 months of opening
- 89% of nursery places were filled within 12 months of opening



What customers say

“ Not only is the ethos of Belong outstanding, but so is the day-to-day delivery of care - and this is perfectly exemplified by the new village in the heart of Chester. The organisation delivers outstanding homes and care at highly competitive prices. This is the ‘third sector’ at its very best. ”

“ We knew on our first visit to Belong Chester, that it would offer mum the support and stimulation to enable her to continue to live a full and rewarding life. The relaxed atmosphere, caring friendly staff and varied activities are exceeding our expectations for mum. ”

“ We feel privileged to have made a home here and experience all the facilities. We have received such wonderful care within the households and apartments. I'd like to thank management and staff for such wonderful support as nothing is too much trouble and help is always on hand. ”

Review submitted via
Carehome.co.uk by
DS (Son-in-law of Resident)
published on 16 Sep 2022

Review submitted via
Carehome.co.uk by
FM (Daughter of Resident)
published on 15 Nov 2022

Review submitted via
Carehome.co.uk by
EL (Resident) published
on 23 Jan 2023

Artist residencies

Belong Chester was the first village to open with artist residencies, facilitated thanks to Belong's research partnership with the Bluecoat, Liverpool's Centre for Contemporary Art, which explores how to embed the arts in new care environments and improve the lives of people living with dementia.

Artists commissioned by the project, Brigitte Jurack, Mary Prestidge, Jonathan Raisin, Alan Dunn, Roger Hill and Tabitha Moses, spent five months working with Belong customers, as well as with children from the nursery.

The creative outputs of the research project, called *Where the Arts Belong*, are being exhibited at Chester's Grosvenor Museum. *Seen and Heard – Adventures in Arts and Dementia* includes displays of residents' work, including ceramics, sound art, paintings and postcards, with a dedicated space contextualising dementia and a film screening featuring interviews with the artists and participants.

Tabitha Moses, artist and project facilitator from the Bluecoat, said: "We are delighted to be showcasing Belong customers' great work and celebrating their achievements.

"We hope that the conversations that come out of the exhibition will go some way towards changing the perception of life with the condition and evidence the amazing impact arts engagement has, proving it is possible to live well with dementia."

Susan Goldsmith, Chief Operating Officer at Belong, added: "Our four-year collaboration with the Bluecoat has proven to be highly successful, with our customers relishing the opportunity to work alongside the artists, learning new skills and enjoying the delights of creative expression."



The Nursery in Belong: our first intergenerational care village

What makes The Nursery in Belong unique is the way it has been integrated into daily life at the village, both through planned and spontaneous opportunities.

The Nursery in Belong is the culmination of five years of collaborative planning with award-winning national intergenerational charity Ready Generations, which operates the nursery.



Free-flow access to the secure nursery and residents' gardens enables spontaneous experiences to happen, such as planting, weeding and just enjoying the sunshine together.

Beyond the nursery space itself, intergenerational experiences have been designed to be facilitated throughout the village. For example, the library area includes bookshelves and resources for both adults and children, and The Bistro has high quality seating and high chairs to enable friends of all ages to eat together.

Regular features of the programme 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.

Belong's Intergenerational Practice Lead, Sophie McKeon, works alongside village and nursery teams to support the planning, co-ordination and evaluation of the intergenerational curriculum.

Research setting

Interest in this pioneering work is growing, nationally and internationally. The Nursery in Belong works in partnership with the universities of Stirling and Northumbria to research the benefits of the approach for children, residents and their families, as well as early years and care workforces. The intention is that it will develop into a blueprint for intergenerational practice.

The Nursery's bespoke *Attuned Relationships Model* sits alongside its *Mirrored Curriculum Framework* to support the planning of the highest quality opportunities and experiences for both groups. The impact is continuously monitored and evaluated to support ongoing innovation and practice improvement.



The Nursery in Belong has already been distinguished globally, receiving the International Innovation Award at the Generations Working Together Excellence Awards 2023.

Benefits for residents

Within its launch year, some of the first residents to move into the village, including those living with dementia, are seeing improvements in physical and mental wellbeing and reporting how the nursery has enriched their lives and given them new purpose.

Intergenerational living is contributing to reduced anxiety, and relatives report that being around children means people with dementia are less agitated. Residents who initially said the nursery was a lovely idea, but not for them, are now enthusiastic attendees at intergenerational events.

Colleagues report that daily engagement with children's care and learning gives our customers a renewed sense of purpose. This manifests in greater motivation to engage in physical activity, including walking further when they go 'prambling' (taking little ones out in their prams) and taking part in dance and movement sessions. By supporting the children's learning through storytelling, reading, sharing memories and teaching simple skills, there is improved cognitive functioning and mental wellbeing. Data also suggests that residents living with dementia are more relaxed and eat more when they share mealtimes with children.

There are benefits for apartment residents too, with over 80% reporting that both planned and spontaneous interactions are changing their lives for the better, and their families also commenting on the difference children are making to their loved ones' wellbeing.

Benefits for children and families

Parents of children attending the nursery are excited by the significant advances in children's vocabulary, language and social and emotional skills.

The nursery also meets the needs created by changing family dynamics. For example, many Belong residents live a distance away from children and grandchildren, so they welcome the opportunity to interact with the children. Several parents of nursery children have relocated for work from other countries including India, Spain, Nigeria and Ireland. They don't have the family support systems older relatives provide. This means that they truly value the sustained friendships and 'listening ear' offered by our residents, not only for their children but also for themselves.



Transformative impact

Belong Chester apartment tenants, Alan and Diana, are the first to become formally recognised as Intergenerational Champions. They visit the nursery most days, often taking their pet budgie. Alan reports that the nursery has had a transformative effect on their wellbeing. "It has brought the joy back into our lives," he says. "Having the nursery children around reminds me of what it was like when our children were young."



Wider intergenerational approach

Across all Belong villages, teams continue to build relationships with colleges, schools, nurseries and community groups to create intergenerational opportunities for residents.

Commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day

At Belong Morris Feinmann, older and younger generations came together to share lesser-known personal stories of people's experiences during the Holocaust and the Second World War, ahead of Holocaust Memorial Day.

Young adults working with The Manchester Jewish Museum visited the care village to share a special preview of their work exploring ways to commemorate the Holocaust, including poetry, playwriting and textile manufacturing.

In return, the guests, known as 'Creative Activists', had the chance to meet and greet residents, some of whom include Holocaust refugees and survivors. They also visited the village's Holocaust exhibition, which documents those residents' stories, whilst honouring the millions of Jews who suffered persecution at the hands of the Nazis.



Pictured (top): Sally Hirst (left) with Mignon Franks.

Pictured (bottom): Peter Mittler at the village Holocaust exhibition.

Belong Warrington chocolate factory

Embracing an intergenerational experience with friends from Stockton Heath Primary School, residents at Belong Warrington village transformed their home into a Willy Wonka factory by becoming chocolatiers in the name of indulging their mutual affection for confection.

Children, aged between 5 and 11, worked 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!"



Pictured: Shirley Mollet, Belong Warrington experience day customer, with her new friends Frankie and Ronnie from Stockton Heath Primary School.

Belong Crewe playgroup sessions

Belong Crewe community launched a new intergenerational playgroup designed to bring people together and promote relationships between all ages. 'Across the Generations' stay-and-play offers parents, guardians, and their little ones the chance to spend some quality time with older people residing at Belong Crewe. The free monthly sessions are made possible thanks to a partnership with St Andrew's Church.

The meet-ups enable children up to the age of five years (and their grown-ups) to share in activities with Belong residents, including 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.



Sheila Manning makes a new friend.

Across the Generations is proving extremely popular

Forging connections with the community is a big part of what we do

One mum said: "I love this initiative so much and I'm going to take some of the craft ideas to do [at home] with my little boy! Keep up the great work everyone!" Another parent added: "What a great idea for all generations."

Jess Butler, Experience Co-ordinator at Belong Crewe, said: "Forging connections with the community is a big part of what we do, as well as supporting our residents, who have loved spending time with our little guests. Some of them don't have grandchildren and vice versa, and their interactions and conversations have been wonderful to see and hear."

Dancing delight at Belong Wigan

Young dancers from KAM Performing Arts Academy put on an unforgettable show for the Belong Wigan community, who enjoyed an array of ballet, modern and contemporary routines.

The audience included residents, apartment tenants and Belong at Home customers who were supported to visit the village for the performance by the community support team who had organised the event. One relative commented: "It was amazing; mum absolutely loved it!" while another said: "Thank you Belong for organising this; it meant our dad could see his granddaughters perform again."



KAM Performing Arts Academy at Belong Wigan.

Dementia focus



During the year, Belong appointed leading dementia expert, Caroline Baker, as Head of Dementia and Care Quality, a newly created role with a focus on driving the organisation's dementia strategy. Caroline is Co-chair of the National Care Forum's Dementia Forum.

Belong's nationally and internationally acclaimed village model was developed to transform outcomes for people living with dementia, through its innovative approach to building design, living arrangements, services, training and ethos. Belong also provides an Admiral Nurse service to support customers diagnosed with dementia and their families.

The synergy between Belong's goals and Caroline's experience as a staunch advocate for people with dementia made her a natural appointment to the organisation's senior team. Her career spans three decades, during which time she has been instrumental in championing change to traditional approaches to dementia care and in developing progressive dementia strategies. In 2014, she won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Dementia Care Awards.

B's Dementia Cafés launch



Offering a vibrant and welcoming support group for people with dementia, their friends, carers and

loved ones, B's Café was introduced early in 2023 and is held monthly across all Belong villages.

Based in the village centre, the sessions are hosted by a Belong Admiral Nurse, in conjunction with the village Experience Team, who help facilitate opportunities for verbal and non-verbal communication, for example, through music, art, exercise or dance.

As registered nurses with expertise in dementia, Belong's Admiral Nurses are highly skilled in working with people with dementia and supporting others to find successful strategies to promote wellbeing.



MBE for services to dementia care

In 2022, one of the founders behind the Belong village model was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in the late Queen's birthday honours for services to dementia care.

Tracy Paine, formerly Belong's Deputy Chief Executive, was awarded the MBE for her role in revolutionising dementia care in the UK, pioneering a model which has transformed the quality of life for thousands of older people over the past decade and helped challenge more institutional, task-oriented approaches to care.

Wellbeing through exercise

All Belong villages provide a specialist exercise and rehabilitation service, which offers every resident a personalised exercise programme and one-to-one sessions with qualified exercise specialists.

Exercise sessions mostly take place in Belong village gyms, which are equipped with state-of-the-art machines and technology, especially adapted for older people, with the combination of Belong's expertise and facilities producing excellent outcomes for mobility, falls prevention and wellbeing. Belong also has mobile equipment and strategies to enable exercise to be carried out on the households or in resident rooms where needed.



Exercise Specialist André working with resident Christine at Belong Macclesfield.

Falls prevention

During the year, a new falls prevention programme was launched, working with residents through group exercise sessions designed to target reaction times, improve proprioception, environmental awareness, sensory motivation and stimulation of neurotransmitters.

This programme has been developed specifically to target people neurologically instead of purely physically, supporting those living with dementia who wouldn't ordinarily participate in a group exercise session.

As featured on the BBC One Show

Belong Crewe welcomed the BBC's The One Show and former Shadow Chancellor, Ed Balls, to make a feature on our work in the gym. Ed, who previously made the 2021 BBC documentary, *Inside the Care Crisis*, has a particular interest in the care sector since sharing his personal experience supporting his mother living with dementia.



Ed met with Belong Crewe residents, Richard and Harold, along with specialist instructor, Max, to discuss their cycling programme. The technology used enables the pair to virtually explore breathtaking landscapes of their choice via a screen linked to their exercise bikes. Participants can choose destinations from their childhood, holidays, or anywhere they desire, to keep them motivated whilst cycling. In Ed's case, this was the city of Norwich where he grew up, whilst viewers saw Harold make his first visit to Holyhead in over 80 years.

Case study: Jerry Bradley, Belong Crewe

Jerry, age 66, is a naval veteran, who served on several ships during his years in service. Over 30 years ago, Jerry was involved in a traffic accident which left him paralysed on one side.



Jerry moved into Belong Crewe in May 2018 and took an instant interest in the gym, attending several times a week with exercise specialist, Max. After 11 months, with assistance, he was able to walk again using a quad-pod walking stick and a few months later, Jerry was able to complete the entire three flights of stairs at the village.

When all the village's core services were closed due to Covid, Jerry was still able to access his weekly exercise due to the Silverfit technology and other equipment.

Jerry has maintained his passion and motivation and in the past 12 months has completed a staggering 316.24km (196.5miles) - well done Jerry, we salute you!

Case study: Estelle, Belong Morris Feinmann

When 95 year-old Estelle was assessed by Belong's exercise team in November 2022, she had little range of movement in her neck, no active movement in her right arm and limited movement in her left arm.



She expressed that if there was one thing she would love to be able to do, it was to brush her own teeth, as for over two years she had relied heavily on the support team for assistance, as well as with meals and turning the pages of books or newspapers when reading.

An exercise programme was designed with passive exercises completed three times a week to attempt to re-engage the pathways between her brain and limbs.

Within six weeks, Estelle had regained sufficient mobility in her arm to be able to brush her own teeth. Her exercise plan was expanded and six months down the line, Estelle has continued to improve and no longer requires any assistance to turn the pages in her newspaper or books. Thanks to her commitment to her

exercise regime, she is able to eat independently and has seen an improvement in her overall mobility. Well done Estelle – you are an inspiration!

Wellbeing through music

Music has been proven to be a highly effective agent in unlocking memories, reducing isolation and helping older people connect, communicate and regain their sense of identity. Over the past year, Belong has launched a number of new initiatives designed to enhance wellbeing through music.

Music therapy at Belong Warrington

Belong employed its first music therapist at Belong Warrington, as part of a new engagement with the UK's largest music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins.

Pam Thomson, an experienced music therapist and Goldsmiths, University of London alumna, is working with customers in small groups and one-to-one, using instruments including tambourines, drums and their voices, to



Experience Day customer, Arthur, with Pam Thomson.

translate their personal experiences, memories and observations of the world through the power of music. Pam explains: "Making music together offers companionship without any pressure of conversation or the need to pick up on social cues. It can help to access memories and foster feelings of connection and belonging."

New choir at Belong Morris Feinmann

Thanks to the legacy of one of its past residents, Belong Morris Feinmann enlisted Manchester choir master extraordinaire, Dan McDwyer, to form The Tomforte Community Choir, which meets weekly in the village and, after months of rehearsals, staged a gala performance to mark His Majesty the King's coronation.



Dan McDwyer leads the Tomforte choir.

Angela Luckett, Experience and Cultural Co-ordinator at Belong Morris Feinmann, shares more: "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 leaves the room for an hour – it's remarkable."

Community engagement

In the year that bistros reopened to the public and the Experience Day service relaunched, Belong was delighted to see its villages once more filled with members of the wider community for a range of events, activities and some very flamboyant celebrations.



Our bi-monthly *What's On* programmes were reinstated and these are once again distributed in the wider community to enable people to access talks, walks, workshops, performances, fairs and much more taking place in our villages.

We also welcomed back visiting health professionals, who provide a range of services to the Belong community, from GP visits to podiatry appointments and dental check-ups to eye tests. Volunteers have also started to return, providing mobile shops, facilitating coffee mornings, supporting with art sessions and helping to brighten our gardens.



Alongside this, the relaunch of our Experience Days service meant that we provided 2,773 days of specialist day care, enabling people living in the wider community to access support and meaningful activity in a warm and caring environment, while giving their usual carers what is often a much needed break.

Relationships with a whole range of community groups were rekindled, from churches to schools, museums to sports clubs and MPs to local councils. We counted links to over 90 organisations, a figure that is growing by the day.

The impact of these networks in creating vibrant communities is seen in the range of events that have taken place across our villages over the past year.

Comic Relief fundraiser makes TV headlines

The creation of Belong Men – a take on Mr Men characters by customers and colleagues at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme – caught the imagination of Staffordshire broadcasters, as BBC Midlands Today featured the fundraiser in their news round-up. Sales of the Belong Men branded merchandise raised almost £250 for Comic Relief.



15 years serving the Macclesfield community

Belong Macclesfield brought together its customers, families, and the local community for a crystal-themed birthday party, celebrating 15 years since opening its doors.

The sweet fifteen was marked with live entertainment, including big band performances from Rich Swings, the contorting skills of a balloon sculpture artist and a visit from David Rutley, Member of Parliament for Macclesfield.



Pictured (left to right): David Rutley MP; resident, Meta; General Manager, Caroline Ray and CEO, Martin Rix.

Warrington residents play zookeeper

Members of the Belong Warrington community forged friendships with some special visitors including iguanas, tortoises and snakes, after a mobile zoo paid a visit for an animal therapy session, bringing the delights of the natural world to their home at Belong.

Louise Kelly, Experience Co-ordinator at Belong Warrington, explains: "Our quieter customers and those living with dementia really engaged by interacting with the creatures. People have a different relationship with animals and being with them offers a sensory experience."



Pictured: Gwen Mason with Callum Murphy, Support Worker.

Queen's Baton Relay visit

Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme was chosen to be part of the route for The Queen's Baton Relay, putting it on the map ahead of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Belong co-founder, Tracy Paine, carried the baton through the Belong Heritage Gallery and wider care village, meeting members of the West Midland Armed Forces and local children and circus performers from the famous Van Buren family.



Pictured (right to left): Peter Norman, General Manager at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tracy Paine MBE and the official escort from the Queen's Baton Relay Team.

The future

Belong's vision is to enable older people to live the lives they choose in vibrant care villages and we have looked to bring this model to more people in new locations over the years.

Belong Birkdale

Preparatory work on Belong Birkdale resumed in 2022 following the appointment of Whitfield and Brown, specialists in dementia accommodation, to complete the care village build. Handover is anticipated to be late 2024.



The Southport care village will be home to over 100 people. Accommodation includes six households with 24-hour care and nursing support and 30 one and two bedroom independent living apartments, which will be available to buy or rent. Belong Birkdale will also feature a village centre with a range of amenities.

Innovation

Belong also continues to drive improvements to existing services through innovation. This includes evaluating new technologies, whether for the provision of care records and interventions, training, gym equipment, or sensors and alert systems. It also encompasses exploring new ways of working to address key organisational challenges.



Last year, Belong established four innovation groups that meet quarterly to explore best practice and enhancements in the areas of 'Quality', 'Dementia Care', 'Recruitment and Retention' and 'Digital'. These forums meet to discuss new ideas and ensure a culture of continuous improvement is embedded across the organisation.

Research

Belong is involved in a number of research partnerships designed to improve outcomes for residents. These include our nursery partnership with Ready Generations, our engagement with music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins, and our collaboration with The Bluecoat on the *Where the Arts Belong* action research project.



Belong is a not-for-profit organisation with over thirty years' experience in providing outstanding care. As a not-for-profit, any surplus is reinvested into its award-winning services, people and facilities.

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BELONG
VILLAGES