



How do you rate your staff?



By Ed Russell
Director of Operations

The importance of small acts of kindness by staff has been emphasised in a study of WCS homes by Age UK Warwickshire.

Volunteers from Age UK have inspected four of our homes and conducted interviews with people who live there. Their findings have been reported and published on our website as part of an **Experts by Experience** project.

Factors like the environment, meals and cleanliness all received mainly positive comments from the experts, but it was the importance of staff attitude that was singled out.

We already knew from user feedback that the people who live in WCS homes highly rate the staff who work in their homes, but what this project gives us is feedback from an outsider's perspective.

Volunteers spoke movingly about WCS staff and the kindness they witnessed as they went about their work; a level of compassion which, as one volunteer described, 'cannot be taught'.

We're reassured by the volunteers' findings but we're not complacent. All staff are participating in a training program implementing WCS's values which began last year.

We've also worked closely with people in WCS homes to develop our employee charter that cements our values into every single act of care. Everyone has signed up to our values training, including myself.

Our values training leaflet. More information can be found on the About Us section of our website.



Above: Age UK volunteer Adrian chats with Peter who visits Westlands once a week.

Last year, 210 people gave us feedback in our Annual Review. **You scored WCS staff:**

Helpfulness: $\frac{8.8}{10}$

Care: $\frac{8.6}{10}$

Attitude: $\frac{8.7}{10}$



Our project with Age UK scored WCS an average of 8.7/10 in 35 areas.

The comments reinforce the message that things like eye-contact, calling people by their first name (rather than dear, or duck!), humour, and warm body language are priceless when working in someone's home.

Home from home

"At WCS we believe a care home is your home; we try to develop activities that reflect people's hobbies and interests."

Christine Asbury, WCS Care Chief Executive Officer

If you'd like to contribute to our newsletter with an article, idea or picture, please get in touch via post, email p.horton@wcs-care.co.uk or use Facebook or Twitter.

Rugby

Mayor experiences a typical day at Drovers House

Rugby Mayor Ramesh Srivastava visited Drovers House care home for Dignity Action Day in February to see how its shop and household kitchens brought dignity to life.

Harry Sowden of Drovers House showed Cllr Mayor Srivastava how Drovers' design meant people there had more choice, independence and freedom in everyday life – something which is at the core of what Dignity Action Day is about. The Mayor experienced a typical day at Drovers House, visiting its minimart with Harry to pick up fresh vegetables before taking them back to his household's open-plan kitchen to blend them into soup for lunch on his household.

Drovers' shop, café, salon and open-plan kitchens offers older people and those living with dementia a lifestyle that many other homes cannot.

"I think that all care homes should be centred on people continuing living the way they're used to – people who live here can use their skills to help cook or grow vegetables or prepare meals, for example.

"It means that people experience more variety and can enjoy the things they always have."

Harry, a former NHS nurse from North Yorkshire and resident of Drovers House



Harry Sowden shows Mayor Cllr Ramesh Srivastava around Drovers House before making parsnip soup.

Get involved:

Every household in Drovers House has a soup machine, so making soup is a doddle.



Bedworth and Nuneaton

Fairfield welcomes home's former laundress

A former laundress moved into the home where she once worked.

Vera Watkins, 86, retired from Fairfield in Bedworth around 20 years ago but has been reunited with staff who remember her from the early 1990s. According to Vera, the home, which is run by Warwickshire charity WCS Care, has changed dramatically since she last saw it.

"I worked here for seven years and I loved it, but I had a shock when I saw how much it had changed. "Fairfield looks similar from the outside but inside it's so modern that it's almost unrecognisable," said Vera, who previously worked at the Alfred Herbert factory in Coventry.

Last week Vera enjoyed a tour of Fairfield's laundry from current laundry assistant Lisa Tatlow, who was given some tips from her predecessor.

"I've had a tour of the new laundry services and the new machines there are also very different, I might learn how they work in future in case I ever fancy doing a shift!"

Vera Watkins of Fairfield



Above: Vera tours the laundry at her new home. Below: A photograph of a laundry room taken in the 1930s.



We've got it easy these days

Joan Knight, 89, of Attleborough Grange, recalls her mother's laundry day:

"Every Monday was laundry day in our house, when my mother would wash clothes for myself and my 11 sisters and two brothers – so it was a very busy day! "We used two long 'pusher' sticks to pump water and soap through the clothes before they went through a hand-driven mangle. You'd soon break into a sweat using the old equipment so it's no wonder she got us all to help out!"

Leamington and Warwick

Woodside wins John Taylor Care Home of the Year Award

Three awards were given to WCS staff in March from John Taylor's in Leamington - Malcolm from Sycamores and Wesley from Woodside won Carer of the Year Awards, and Woodside won Care Home of the Year.

Pictured left to right at the awards ceremony: Jenny Sims, Elaine Moore, Clive Mackreth, Carer of the Year Malcolm Moore, Lisa Williams, Alison Porter, Lorraine Turner, Natalie Sims and Carer of the Year Wes Lewitt.



Leamington Spa

Choir thanked by people at Four Ways

A former member of Leamington and Warwick Operatic Society has thanked volunteers from National Grid in Warwick, who sang some seasonal songs at Four Ways care home in Lillington.

Mary Stephens, 86, was a member of the operatic society – which changed its name to the Leamington and Warwick Musical Society in 2002 – for over 25 years. She said: “It was very kind of the volunteers to come and sing to us and to me their choir sounded very professional.”

Mary starred in several glittering productions over the years including Half a Sixpence, Dolly, Mame, South Pacific, Fiddler on the Roof and The Sound of Music. She won a long service award at the society for 25 years after joining in the late 1970s.

- **Leamington and Warwick Musical Society** was founded in 1921, presenting works of Gilbert and Sullivan.
- The success of Broadway musicals in the 50s and 60s (including Oliver! and Guys and Dolls) meant audiences changed, eventually leading to the group's name change.



Mary pictured above at Four Ways and below (stood centre) performing in Half a Sixpence.



Nuneaton

Drayton Court contributes to Camp Hill's new artwork

84-year-old Gordon Ellard of Drayton Court care home joined the Mayor of Nuneaton in unveiling part of an art project taking pride of place in the heart of Camp Hill.

Five displays have been unveiled on the side of Camp Hill Education, Sports and Social (Chess) Centre, each depicting an era in the area. Gordon and other Drayton Court residents were part of the artists' consultation and helped them document Camp Hill's history throughout the 20th Century - which is what the plaque Gordon unveiled referred to.



Above: Gordon Ellard, with Care Manager Ann Lee, unveils the art people at Drayton Court helped to create.

Bedworth

104-year-old Freda (who is yet to get a grey hair) spends her birthday entertaining people at Fairfield with stories of her past

Freda Taylor, who is yet to get a grey hair, was born in Queen Street, Bedworth, on January 7 1911 and has lived at Fairfield since April 2010. Although she received many cards, gifts and flowers from friends, she decided to keep celebrations on the day low key.

Her vivid memories of historical events are a constant source of fascination for younger generations at Fairfield, and her birthday was another excuse for carers to strike up a conversation about her life history.

"In July 1914 I remember overhearing my father telling someone that we were at war."

Freda explained: "I think it's great that the young people here take such an interest in the past so I never mind talking about it. One of my earliest memories happened over 100 years ago on July 28 1914 on Blackpool beach; I remember overhearing my father telling someone he'd just heard on the radio that we were at war."

Freda was one of seven siblings brought up in Bedworth. She married her husband Gordon before the Second World War broke out and they had one son, Keith. She spent the war years working for Hinckley Building Society collecting and delivering money between businesses around Bedworth on her bike while Gordon was part of the war effort in the Middle East.

She said: "One memory I have of the Second World War was N o v e m b e r 14 1940 - the night Coventry suffered its biggest bombing raid. I had four-year-old Keith with me and my dad drove us in his car from the outskirts of Coventry to relative safety in Bulkington. It was a wicked journey and a night I will never forget. The bangs were horrible and made us all jump.

"My father, who suffered a heart condition, had to ask my brother, Ray, who was a registered conscientious objector, to drive part of the way because the stress was too much for him."

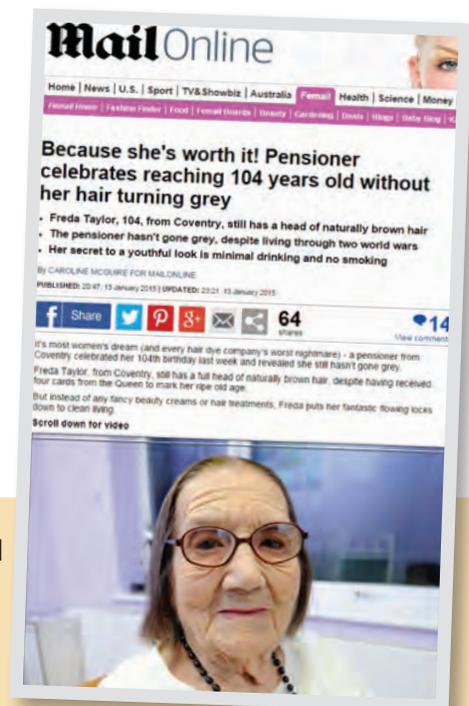
After the war, Freda enjoyed many holidays with her family, going on several luxury cruises to places such as Turkey and Greece, but said her favourite destination of all was Sidmouth in Devon.



Freda Taylor is pictured with carer Katie Smith and Ricky Tweedy, Fairfield's Exercise and Activity Coordinator.

"I remember my brothers and I being under strict orders from dad not to smoke, and because I looked up to him so much, it was something I never did. My advice to younger people would be to follow my dad's advice and look after yourselves."

Freda on staying young.



Freda's youthful features caught the attention of the national press.

Has your laundry service improved?

Laundry may not be the first thing that comes to mind when people are choosing where to live, but we've learnt it speaks volumes about a home.

People rightly expect to use their bedsheets and towels in their own home and not have to use someone else's. WCS's new **Laundry Assistant** roles were introduced in Autumn 2014 after people's feedback highlighted problems with the laundry service throughout the group.

In response to people's comments, Christine Asbury, WCS Care CEO, spent some 60 hours doing front-line laundry shifts to see how it could be improved.

Changes made to your laundry service:

- **New 7-day-a-week posts mean laundry is now done by a dedicated laundress instead of by care staff.**
- **A discrete labelling system has been introduced and has been used where necessary to further improve reliability**
- **Every washing machine in the WCS group now has user-friendly instructions to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency.**

Linda, Dewar Close's Laundry Assistant (pictured above), has worked at Dewar since January 2014 and has experience of the home's laundry service before and after the project to improve it took place.

"Complaints about the laundry service used to be more common here than we wanted, but with the new system they don't happen.

There was frustration about items occasionally being returned to the wrong people, or put in the wrong drawer, for example – and that's understandable; if that was me, I'd hate the thought of my clothes being given to someone else!

"People who live here often tell me

their favourite thing about Dewar Close is that it's such a 'homely home'. To me, people having their own towels and bedsheets is what that's about – this is their home, it's not a hotel.

"The new laundry role is part of that, and when someone gets their favourite dress or shirt back the same day they gave it to me, it always makes them smile."



Rugby

People at Dewar say there's no excuse for not voting

People living at Dewar Close care home are determined not to let themselves vanish from the electoral register

Figures from the Electoral Commission suggest that while voter turnout is highest for people over the age of 65, people are less likely to vote by the time they reach 80. WCS Care, which runs four care homes in Rugby, is currently in the process of assisting people living with them to make sure they are added to the electoral register and have access to information about their local candidates.

In February, Rugby's Conservative MP Mark Pawsey visited WCS's Dewar Close home in Bilton to take questions on a range of political matters including tax avoidance, social care and the relationship between the Monarchy and the Government.

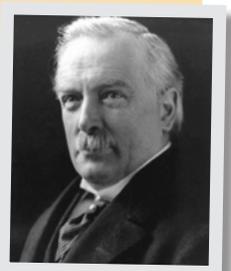


Mr Thomas chats with Mark Pawsey MP.

"I think it's vital that no group of people get excluded from politics. It would be a shame if older people or those with vision problems found themselves excluded from debates just because they didn't have access to the right information - I don't think there's any excuse for that in this day and age."

Paul Thomas, 92, a retired tool maker who lives at Dewar Close.

Can you name these six former Prime Ministers?



Answers: (from top left) Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, Clement Attlee, Tony Blair, Edward Heath and David Lloyd George.

Seven day a week cover

There's no such thing as 'closed' when it comes to someone's home.

From now on at WCS homes you'll never have to call back on a Monday again – as a new management structure at homes now provides cover seven days a week.



By Christine Asbury
Chief Executive

It's the weekend, you're at the leisure centre and there's a problem.

You'd expect to see someone who knows what's going on and can sort the problem out, wouldn't you?

Or, you're trying to decide which gym to join, so you want to visit a few at the weekend – you wouldn't expect to be told to come back on a Monday-Friday, between 9 and 5!

Family and friends of people who live in WCS homes – or who might be thinking of moving in – tend to have more time outside office hours to look around, visit, ask questions and sort out any issues.

WCS homes deliver a 24 hour service, and people can visit anyone living in our homes at any time of night or day. It is one of our central values that we are responsive to people's needs, listen and deal with issues when they arise, so we need to be available

when you are.

To enable this to happen, we have recruited 24 **new Care Coordinators** across the homes. These will join the existing Home Managers and Care Managers in leading the care delivery and communication across your home and are all internal appointments, so in most homes they will be staff who are probably already familiar to you.

We put them through a challenging recruitment process to prove to us that they were ready for this level of responsibility and that they were committed to our values.

We were delighted with the enthusiasm, knowledge and inspiration that candidates demonstrated during their interviews, and every Care Coordinator now has a project to implement to improve some aspect of life in that home.

We'll be backing this up with an

extensive training programme, as well as lots of guidance and support from our Care Managers, Home Managers, and our **newly appointed Senior Managers (pictured below):**

• Shirley Randle
(Home Manager,
Drayton Court)



• Pearl Mackey
(Home Manager,
Four Ways)



• Anna Read
(Home Manager,
Newlands)



Senior Home Managers will champion and model effective, value based leadership across the services, supporting the home leadership teams in continuing to develop their own value based leadership within each home.

Look out for the names of your new Care Coordinators displayed in your home.

“What difference will seven day a week cover make?”



Answered by Wes Lewitt, Care Co-ordinator at Woodside

“The new set-up will mean that everyone at Woodside, whether a person living there, their friend or relative or a member of staff, can be confident they can

have access to a manager if they need one.

“It’s good news because people will no longer have to wait until office hours before they can expect to speak to someone about whatever matters to

them.

“In my experience, most of the time people do want to speak to a manager is when they have questions about the home – about anything from cleaning and our garden to menus and what people

have been up to since they last came.

“However, as a carer I have had to help people who have specifically asked for a manager, inevitably during their shift off, or when they’re not here! Understandably it can be frustrating for people when they want to speak to someone. With our new management cover seven days a week from first thing in the morning until last thing at night, that won’t happen.

“Finally, I know carers will feel more confident as they go about their jobs with the support of a senior colleague whenever they need it.”

Castle Brook begins

Demolition begins to make way for Castle Brook care home

Demolition work has begun in Common Lane industrial estate in Kenilworth to make way for Castle Brook care home.

Castle Brook will open in Autumn 2016 and will be WCS Care’s second purpose-built dementia care home after Drovers House in Rugby opened in 2013. The development will create around 100 jobs in the Kenilworth area.

Christine Asbury, WCS Care CEO, commented: “Castle Brook will be a wonderful example of how WCS’s

ethos and modern design can enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives in a home they’ll be proud to call theirs. It will challenge many people’s ideas about what a care home is and the quality of life people can expect. “As with WCS’s other homes, Castle Brook will have the feel of a vibrant, bustling community that’s led by the people who live there.”

Construction work on Castle Brook is set to start in Summer 2015 and the home opens in Autumn 2016. WCS Care is already collecting



names of people who may be interested in working at Castle Brook.

If you would like to be a part of this new home, please visit the Opportunities page on WCS Care’s website – wcs-care.co.uk.

Oomph! comes to WCS

WCS Care began working with London-based social enterprise Oomph! Wellness last year to provide exercise classes in people's homes. Since then, feedback has been phenomenal, with people commenting on an exciting range of transformative and profound benefits...



By Kay Ward
Deputy Director of
Operations

Exercise is often something associated with commitment, routine and discipline – but those things couldn't be more different to what Oomph! (an acronym of Our Organisation Makes People Happy) sessions are about.

For the classes, a party atmosphere is created by turning the music up loud, using colourful props and encouraging singing and dancing

as people are led into an aerobic routine.

The sessions are delivered by WCS Care's new Activity and Exercise Coordinators, all of whom have completed an Oomph! training course.

Mary Fellows, a 92 year old former Land Army girl who suffers from arthritis, told WCS: "These sessions are unlike anything I've seen before and people's reaction has been wonderful.

"There's so much singing,

dancing and laughter - and that atmosphere remains long after the sessions have finished.

"It makes doing things that my arthritis stopped me doing like housework, making tea and carrying shopping a little easier."

Come and see what all the fuss is about for yourself. Ask when the next Oomph! session is in your home and give it a go.

Thank-you and farewell to Helen



Helen next to Nick Wood (centre) and Greg Ward, WCS's new Property Services Manager.

By Nick Wood
Director of Finance

WCS Care bid farewell to one of its longest serving employees in April after Helen Randall retired from the organisation after 28 years.

Helen, formerly WCS Care's Property and Contracts Manager, has been crucial in keeping people safe and happy while WCS's homes underwent significant investment projects such as the installation of WCS's open-plan kitchens, lifts and

en suite facilities.

As well as managing contractors and ensuring their work was up to scratch, Helen was also our trouble shooter, being on call 24/7 to deal with emergencies such as burst pipes and broken boilers. Her dedication ensured countless people have been kept safe and happy throughout all WCS maintenance and construction projects.

Helen started her career in 1987, before WCS Care had been set up

and when all homes were run by Warwickshire County Council.

As a carer she worked her way up to Care Officer, before accepting a post in 1994 to liaise between homes and contractors as the newly set-up charity Warwickshire Care Services (later WCS Care) embarked on a ten-year county-wide investment program to transform homes.

Helen told WCS: "I've had a wonderful time working for WCS and it's been great to work with so many fantastic people. No two days have been the same and I'm taking away some fantastic memories and stories I'll never forget.

"I'd say the best part of my job was seeing the look on people's faces after they saw how building projects had improved their home. Quality of life for people living in homes has increased 100 per cent in the last 30 or so years and I'm sure it will continue to do so."

Now that Helen has retired, she says she will be spending more time with her grandchildren and holidaying in Spain. She added: "The first thing I'm looking forward to doing is switching off my alarm clock!"



Greg Ward is our new Property Services Manager. He joined WCS Care in September 2014 after 28 years as Birmingham City Council's Principle Health and Safety Advisor.

Helen answers:

"How have care homes changed since 1987?"

"Quality of life has improved dramatically since I started. Many homes suffered from a lack of investment in the late 1980s – it's hard to imagine now but even the furniture was falling apart in some homes.

"That all changed when homes in Warwickshire were transferred in 1992 from the county council to WCS Care. This was controversial at the time, but because we were not for profit we were then able to invest in significant home improvements that probably wouldn't have happened under the local authority. It turned out to be a good decision in my opinion because standards were driven up – homes looked much,



Above: Drovers House would have looked very different if it was designed in the late 1980s...

much better, there was suddenly money to invest in them and the then Warwickshire Care Services charity focused heavily on staff training.

"This meant that another huge change has been the development of care as a career choice. When I started in 1987 there was no formal training whatsoever for staff, care was done from the heart, but there was no knowledge or skills base to draw from and no career structure. Homes were managed by people without a background in care."

Did you know?

Helen started working for WCS Care (then part of Warwickshire County Council) 28 years ago in 1987, however she was only our 12th longest serving employee when she retired. **Here are our ten longest serving employees:**

10th: **Tracey Jarvis**, Night Carer, Drayton Court (since 1989)

9th: **Tracey Keeling**, Cook, Drayton Court (since 1986)

8th: **Elizabeth Gibson**, Activity and Exercise Co-ordinator, Dewar Close (since 1986)

7th: **Maureen Skinner**, House

Keeping Assistant, Newlands, (since 1984)

6th: **Karen Hughes**, Lead Carer, Attleborough Grange, (since 1982)

5th: **Shirley Randle**, Home Manager, Drayton Court (since 1978)

4th: **Lynda Peisley**, House Keeping Assistant, Newlands (since 1976)

3rd: **Kay Regan**, Day Carer, Fairfield (since 1976)

2nd: **Carol Turrell**, House Keeper, Woodside (since 1972)

1st: **Maureen Preedy**, House Keeping Assistant, Woodside (since 1969) ... 45 years!

Our people

5 minutes with...

Sam Ledsham

Sam is an Activity and Exercise Co-ordinator at Newlands. A five minute chat revealed:

What do you do at WCS and what's the highlight of your day?

People at Newlands tell me what they'd like to do, and I help make sure they have what they need to do it. The Activity and Exercise Co-ordinator is a varied role but the highlight is always seeing people smile – you can never get tired of that.

What makes you stay working for WCS?

Making a difference to people and seeing them happy in their home is why I love coming to work. No two days are the same and it's so homely that sometimes I forget I'm at work!

I have worked in many jobs from making pies and carpets, to electric fires and gas cookers. I was also a paint technician at Aston Martin at Gaydon and I was also a self employed removal man for Ledshams Of Leamington, but now I have found a job I love – I wish I'd taken up care years ago!

If you were to choose a favourite activity to do with people in the home, what would it be?

I love going to see live music with people who live



here, so I'd say doing that. Recently I've seen the Levellers in Leamington along with a few other folk bands and had an amazing time.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I used to enjoy socialising with a few drinks but I feel too old for that now, so I'm a family man. I live with my partner Clare and four year old daughter, Maggie, who enjoys coming to events at Newlands such as when the Spa Strummer ukelele band came here. I think entertaining a four year old is plenty to keep someone occupied in whatever spare time they have!

I also follow Liverpool FC which has given me many happy memories and also some bad ones, the worst of which was probably last season. I still can't believe Steven Gerrard slipped over and effectively cost us the league title!

What music do you like?

I was a child of the 70s, a teenager of the 80s and a clubber of the 90s. I like The Prodigy, Chemical Brothers, Faithless, The Verve and Oasis, but I'll listen to anything live if they put on a good show.

We're passionate about good care. Are you?

WCS Care is currently looking for **new members** to join our charity's voluntary **Board of Directors**. Applicants will need strong business and leadership skills, particularly in the legal, financial, property, business, marketing, health or care sectors. Expenses are paid and trustees will be expected to contribute one day a month.

- **For more details, please contact Christine Asbury, WCS Care Chief Executive, on 01926 864242.**

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