

**The care exchange - Series 3**  
**Episode 7: Power our carers through renewable energy**  
**Ben Ashton**

**Hosts:** Pia Rathje-Burton and



Yeah, so actually, I'm probably you know, over the last, since we've started, I would imagine nearly every company has a rostering software, you know, care management software. And in that software, you can find so much data in terms of your carers' travel data, for example, you know, how many miles they travel per per period and one interesting metric to look at in the in the homecare space is to work out how many visits you did in a month and how many The how many miles your carer has travelled in the month because our rostering system is linked to Google Maps, and it has all their routes and everything, so you can see exactly what that looks like. And that gives you a, you know, miles per visit metric, which you can then start to manage a little bit more, because often, you know, coordinators always going to be trying to make the most efficient routes possible. But it's not necessarily like a smart target, it's more of a general ambition, as opposed to like something more, more concrete. So being able to say, you know, at the moment, we're doing two and a half miles per visit, can we reduce that down to two, and then work from there really is one way of trying to reduce your footprint.

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 05:47

Okay, and what does the type of car that the person is driving, does all affect it as well?

**Ben Ashton** 05:56

It does. Yeah, so obviously, I think, really, the vast majority of carers on the roads are driving their own cars, and generally they're going to be petrol or diesel cars, often, maybe slightly older vehicles, and, and the nature of their most most care is probably in the communities is done in some suburban or urban areas, and there's a lot of start stop journeys and engines never get warm. And so that means the less efficient, more polluting and everything. So it's definitely a huge sort of issue for the sector that no one talks about, you know, there are so many carers on the road every day that you don't see because they're just a normal normal cars. So our next phase of our carbon journey is to, we're getting car charging installed in our, our offices. And we've literally just, we're expecting it to be delivered soon. But it's a yeah, we're investing in a sort of pilot of a, it's, it's not technically an electric car. Because it's too small to be a car it's like a little it's technically a quadricycle that our our management team are going to use to get out and about and visit clients and do all the reviews and assessments that they need to do. So we're going to trial that and see how it goes, whether that's gonna be the way forward for us or not, I hope it is. They look great. We test drove, I expected a milk float, half milf float If you can imagine that. Which I think could be a really, you know, I think more and more of those things will be coming into the market. And I think there's gonna be big, big improvements. And I think we're very keen to, to hopefully not have to offset anything eventually and just be able to, you know, power our carers through renewable energy. So yeah, that's, that's the thing, the next next step.

**Wendy Adams** 07:57

So I'm assuming you also, you know, promote walking and cycling amongst your carers. Is this well received and how to get your staff on board with this whole environmental sustainability aspect of their job?

**Ben Ashton** 08:15

It's a really good question. I think obviously, active travel is really, really important. And I think it really varies depending on location. So some of our London offices, our carers use Boris bikes to get around works brilliantly. You know, because it's much more densely densely populated, the clients aren't so far









happens away from the office, you know, yeah, I think that definitely is one of the most important bits for us.

**Wendy Adams** 23:14

And I thi







100% That's exactly right. Yeah.

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 34:02

It sounds like you have had a really, you really thought about you know, tried it was there things that you thought afterwards it we're gonna change that the next for the next kind of, I'm assuming you're going to have so arriving in stages, what was mistakes made or just things that you thought when fully thought about that?

**Ben Ashton** 34:20

I think it was really helpful for our team to actually go to Zimbabwe and see the country, you know, what the country is like that they were coming to coming from? Because, you know, to start with, when we were sort of brainstorming what we needed to include, and all this, we were, you know, there was some discussion as to do they have supermarkets out there and they 100% do and it's just really, you know, very much like our supermarket. So I think going out there was really interesting to work out what we need to spend more time on and what we need to spend less time on you Yeah, it's definitely evolved. And actually, now we've got more of a cohort. So we've got

collaborative thing. So you know, a lot of our partners have had care management experience before. So what the support that they need is quite different from from someone coming into the sector from a completely different sector. The support looks really different, depending on who we're who we're working with. But it's that collaborative approach really, definitely does lend itself well. And yeah, it's going well, moment.

**Wendy Adams** 38:14

Yeah, so we always have our time for care slot in every episode, and I would imagine, was what you've just described, your organisational and time saving tips going to be a good one. Because that sounds no pressure. But that sounds like you've got a lot on your plate. And what's your most time saving tip that you could share with podcast listeners?

**Ben Ashton** 38:41

Good question I've heard you and listened to your podcast a lot. So I was expecting this question. So I've got a short term one and a long term one. And very quickly, the short term one is just pick up the phone and talk to people rather than getting into lengthy lengthy email exchanges. Often it's so much easier to just short circuit, something and just either whether it's a complaint or a particular issue to deal with just picking up that phone rather than waiting for lengthy reply. That's the short term one. I think long term what I try and save time with is by actually investing a bit more time initially in in getting your team up to speed with sort of coaching and mentoring and really empowering them to take some stuff off your plate. And then, you know, I think registered managers often do for really good reason hold on to a lot of that responsibility because it is you know, they are legally responsible and I think that can be absolutely overwhelming a lot of the time so if you can empower your team to do some of the some of your jobs for you. That can definitely help and I think that will was a really helps develop their careers as well but hopefully frees you up to do a little bit more of a, you know, steering of the ship rather than frantically shovelling the coal, or whatever they use to power ships these days. But know that that kind of approach I'd say, is, is my tip.

**Wendy Adams** 40:19

I really like both of those, particularly your first one about picking up the phone, because I think over the years, I've worked for lots of organisations where sending an email has been the norm. And you get into that situation where you're emailing people in the same building, or in the same office even. And I think over the years, I've frightened lots of people by just turning up at the edge of their desk to say, Here I am, let's have a conversation. And, you know, it can be such a more helpful way of of, you know, solving a problem or getting an answer or so I absolutely love that one.

**Ben Ashton** 40:55

We've seen it countless times where you know, a little complaint has come in or something, and we just immediately pick up the phone. And often you can completely turn it around and you know, not get into that lengthy, you know, keyboard warrior kind of war and peace style correspondence And just Yeah, it's that human touch. Isn't it? Just actually, yeah, talking to people properly? Yeah,

**Wendy Adams** 41:18

definitely.



You know, and then sometimes things just doesn't work out. And that happens. That doesn't mean that it's you know, but I think, you know, if you're having a regular turn, you need something what is going well, there must be something else going on. Absolutely fascinating. Ben, I've loved our conversation. So thank you so much for your time today. It's been brilliant. Thanks very much.

**Ben Ashton 44:36**

genuine pleasure. Thank you so much.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 44:37**

Take care. Bye. Bye.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 44:48**

So Wendy, what do you think of our conversation with Ben?

**Wendy Adams 44:51**

That was just so interesting, wasn't it? He had so much so many things to talk about that were different to you know, some The conversations we've had with other providers. So really interesting.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 45:03**

Yeah, that environmental sustainability, it's a, it's a topic that that's gonna grow, I can only see growing, you know, I am sure that this is going to be something that's we're going to be talking more and more about. Because it's, you know, as he was talking about, it's kind of coming from all angles, isn't it? Suddenly people are, you know, CQC asking about it, you're probably going to start getting other commissioners insurance, all those kinds of things are probably going to start asking, Well, what are you doing? What are you doing?

**Wendy Adams 45:32**

Yeah. And I think the point you made about younger people as well, you know, it's, this is an issue that's up there in priority for a lot of younger people, maybe who could be our workforce of the future.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 45:44**

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And obviously, as I mentioned, when we were chatting to Ben CQC's quality statement, when when that start does have that environmental sustainability. We very recently recorded a webinar on those new quality statement, what is one of the registered manager webinars, and we did it in the in partnership with the outstanding society. And we had somebody on the webinar, a provider talking about her plans, what she was doing in terms of environmental sustainability. So really interesting to listen to both Ben and that webinar to sort of think Well, what are the things I can do and with that, we provided a complimentary recommendation checklist on environmental sustainability and and it just gives some suggestions about if you're a care home. And if you're, you know, a home care what aresome one of the things you want might want to start thinking about in terms of of meeting

