

ENTRANT: WPR

CATEGORY: Long-Term Client Campaign

CAMPAIGN: Fulfilling Lives

PRIDE AWARDS 2023

BRIEF, OBJECTIVES & BUDGET

Care UK – one of the UK's largest care home providers – prides itself on advanced dementia expertise and helping residents lead fulfilling lives. However, everything changed in 2020 when the entire sector was hit by the pandemic, leading to a dramatic decline in public confidence.

With inevitable under capacity as the country emerged from lockdown, Care UK asked WPR to develop a three-year comms strategy to restore faith in the sector and brand. Challenged to dispel care home myths and celebrate the people living in them, Care UK also wanted to dominate share of voice in the sector, so its name and homes would be front of mind for families considering care.

Working with 92 focus homes, we went on to exceed every KPI set, generating unprecedented levels of coverage and more than doubling Care UK's share of voice.

Budget: May 2020 – April 2023 £663k

THE IDEA, RESEARCH & PLANNING

So damaging were headlines around care homes throughout the pandemic, through no fault of the heroic teams working in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, the challenge facing WPR and Care UK was immense. This was a sector that already needed to change inaccurate ingrained perceptions of care homes as soulless institutions where older people see out their final days, bored and alone.

Added to this, we had a brand vs local dichotomy. Research showed us that families pick a home for its warmth, reputation and team members – rather than its provider – but we needed to raise awareness of Care UK as both facilitators of fulfilling lives and trusted dementia care experts.

STRATEGY, CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

Strategically, we set out to do three things:

1. **Own the unexpected** – transform negative perceptions of care, showing it is not only possible to lead a fulfilling life in later life, with Care UK it is probable.
2. **Own the experience** – demonstrate Care UK's dementia expertise.
3. **Own brand and home** – showcase Care UK's key messages via individual homes, raising each one's profile regionally, while simultaneously telling the brand's 'fulfilling lives' story nationally.

At the heart of our perception shift strategy was 'Wishing Trees'. Residents would post a wish on a tree in their local home and the Care UK team would try to make that dream come true. Gone were images of older people, inactive in day rooms – within months, the media was sharing videos of Care UK residents ice skating, skiing, skydiving, ziplining and more. We showed there is

no limit to what someone can accomplish after they've moved to a care home - shattering damaging myths associated with the sector.

Next, we needed to own experience too. For this, we launched informative, insightful guides: 'Let's Talk About Dementia' in 2022 and 'One Step at a Time' in 2023. For the first, we surveyed 2,000 Brits, resulting in a hard-hitting national campaign showing just how little the nation knew about dementia. Building on that success, we created 'One Step at a Time' in an easy to digest video format, supporting it with further research highlighting misconceptions surrounding dementia. To drive broadcast coverage, we partnered with national treasure Angela Rippon for both guides, adding an element of continuity and relatability, while communicating Care UK's message of expertise - all while driving traffic to the guides.

In addition, to own both brand and home, we launched 'Bedtime Stories', a series of heart-warming videos, showcasing care home residents reading classic fairy tales. 'Platinum Jubilee' was another such campaign, which saw one home transformed into Buckingham Palace for a memorable afternoon tea, complete with thrones, flags and even fur-fluencer Marcel Le Corgi, before jubilee celebrations were rolled out regionally.

DELIVERY & IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS

Our detailed and tailored comms plan blended impactful quarterly campaigns with monthly tactical PR support for 92 homes.

Key campaigns had a national element - such as a video or survey - plus a regional element, so homes could replicate the activity on a smaller scale to maximise coverage. Knowing that Care UK's audience is, for the most part, women in their 40s-50s (typically the decision makers when the time comes for a loved one to move into care), we engineered our stories to suit online titles, packaging them to secure a social media post from the outlet, ensuring maximum eyes on every piece.

We also educated our focus homes on all things PR, by: introducing a process to identify potential PR pieces early on; holding quarterly planning meetings; delivering bespoke PR training to home teams; and providing toolkits.

MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION & IMPACT

Over the last three years, we have consistently increased coverage results, with dramatic growth in national and broadcast hits.

Set a KPI of 3% increase in coverage year-on-year, we smashed all targets, **delivering a 149% increase** in the last year alone (also representing a 189% increase on pre-Covid results) by securing **an incredible 7,063 pieces of coverage**, 90% featured the 'activity-based care' key message.

YEAR	COVERAGE TOTAL	NATIONALS	BROADCAST
May 20–April 21	1,583	40	12
May 21–April 22	2,841	62	13
May 22–April 23	7,091	369	122

Wishing Trees

- 66 stories in the last year
- 2,642 pieces of coverage (130 nationals and 25 broadcast)

Dementia Expertise

- Let's Talk About Dementia
 - 29 broadcast, 11 nationals and 154 regionals
 - 2,750 downloads (1,096 in launch week)
 - 252% increase in web traffic
 - 67% backlink rate
- One Step at a Time
 - 22 broadcast, 10 nationals and 74 regionals to date (launched for Dementia Action Week 15–21 May 2023)
 - 1,834 views on landing page
 - 58% backlink rate

Special Campaigns Examples

- Platinum Jubilee
 - 3 broadcast (including ITV Meridian and BBC Radio Berkshire), 13 nationals and 124 regionals
- Bedtime Stories
 - 1 broadcast, 11 nationals, and 234 regionals
 - 492 campaign page views and high engagement rates – Facebook 22.6%, Twitter 30% and LinkedIn 5.5%

Pre-Covid, Care UK's share of voice, when compared with its main competitors, was 24%. Three years later, thanks to our activity, **it has shot up to 61%** (May 22–April 23).

Most importantly of all, **three years after the first lockdown of 2020, enquiries to Care UK now exceed pre-pandemic levels.**