

How Sue Ann Is Leading Change in Social Care

Introduction

Sue Ann Nnamani—an inspiring registered manager in the social care sector—shares her remarkable journey, breakthrough initiatives, and practical advice for women in care. Drawing on her Caribbean roots and extensive experience in turning around struggling care homes, Sue Ann offers a powerful message of resilience, cultural sensitivity, and peer empowerment.

Who Is Sue Ann Nnamani?

‘I am the registered manager of a 117-bed nursing home in Haringey. We support residents with dementia, various care needs—including palliative care—and cater mainly to those over 65, although we do welcome a few younger adults too, she explains.

She grew up on the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, where her early exposure to care came through her mother's involvement with The Lions Club. In a region lacking formal nursing home facilities, the community used a "poor home" for people with mental health needs. ‘My early experiences—singing, painting nails, and doing hair for those residents during weekend visits—sparked my passion for care,’ Sue Ann recalls. These formative experiences laid the groundwork for her journey from a carer to managing smaller services to now leading a larger-scale nursing home.

A Passion for Making a Difference

When asked what inspired her to join the social care sector, Sue Ann reflects on the personal impact of helping others. "I was deeply moved by the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the elderly. When I arrived in the UK in 2003, I saw that many older adults struggled with daily tasks. By supporting them, we not only improved their wellbeing but also enabled them to lead more fulfilling lives," she says. Her commitment to improving the quality of life for the elderly is both her driving force and her blessing.

Transforming Care: Achievements and Impact

Turning Around a Struggling Home

Sue Ann is a firm believer in the power of strong leadership. "I firmly believe that strong leadership transforms care environments," she states. Faced with a care home rated ‘inadequate’ by the CQC before her arrival, she focused on putting residents at the centre of everything. By assessing what worked, rewarding good work through coaching and mentoring, and building a culture of engagement—even if some staff later left for other fields—she transformed the home into a thriving, resident-centred community.

Raising Standards Through Innovation

Within her first few months, Sue Ann recognised that traditional paper-based systems were insufficient for a service of their size. "We swiftly implemented an electronic care planning system, which dramatically improved our record-keeping," she notes. In addition, she

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championed palliative care by completing a 12-month training programme that led to accreditation under the Gold Standards Framework, ultimately reaching platinum status even during the COVID-19 crisis. A strategic partnership with the Foundation of Nursing Studies also transformed the home into a teaching care home, bringing community initiatives like diabetic screenings directly to residents. These actions have not only improved care standards but have also boosted staff confidence and community engagement.

Celebrating Cultural Heritage and Diversity

Honouring Cultural Traditions

In London's diverse environment, food and traditions play a vital role in a resident's identity. Sue Ann recalls a memorable instance when a Nigerian resident expressed his longing for his favourite soup. "I recall a Nigerian resident who longed for his favourite cultural soup. By hiring a chef with Afro-Caribbean expertise, we were able to provide not only familiar cuisine but also create an environment where residents could eat in a manner true to their cultural practices—such as eating with their hands," she explains. Celebrating cultural days and hosting events where both staff and residents dress in traditional attire helps ensure that everyone feels respected and at home.

Tackling Bullying and Discrimination

Sue Ann believes in addressing issues head-on. Our survey last year also highlighted that this was a problem for women working in social care. "We address issues of bullying and discrimination openly—whether in staff meetings or during resident and relative discussions," she says. By asking direct questions about concerns, her team creates a safe space for sharing and resolving issues quickly. In addition, on-site mental health first aiders and active community engagement further support both residents and staff.

Supporting Each Other in Social Care

Advice for Aspiring Leaders

Sue Ann's advice for women, especially those from BAME backgrounds, is clear and direct. "My message is simple: do it. Stay focused on your goals and use any obstacles as stepping stones. Believe in the value you bring and don't let setbacks deter you. There will always be challenges, but if I can—from humble beginnings to managing large-scale services—so can you. Keep aspiring, share your story, and use your experiences as a platform to climb the ladder of success," she advises.

The Importance of Peer Support

Sue Ann also stresses the value of supporting one another. She encourages everyone to share experiences, mentor each other, and work collaboratively. Open communication—whether through debrief sessions, reflective learning, or simply offering a listening ear—helps build a resilient community. This collective support not only improves care standards but also empowers individuals to tackle future challenges with confidence.

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Balancing Work and Life

Finding Time for Family

Balancing a demanding career with personal life is challenging, but Sue Ann makes it a priority. "I make a conscious effort to switch off after work—silencing my phone and stepping away from emails—so that when I'm at home, I can devote my full attention to my family," she explains. Even when on holiday, she takes steps like deleting work email accounts to ensure she stays fully present with her loved ones, allowing her to recharge and perform at her best.

Embracing Creativity

Creativity plays a big role in Sue Ann's leadership. "I believe that every day in social care could inspire a poem," she remarks. As a published poet, her creative side not only enriches her personal life but also brings a deeper level of empathy and innovation to her leadership. Sharing creative expressions among her team helps humanise their work and highlights the extraordinary care often overlooked.

Looking Ahead: Plans and Hopes for the Future

Sue Ann envisions a social care sector where the contributions of women and BAME professionals are fully recognised. "There is still much work to be done. I believe we need a more collaborative approach that bridges gaps between different sectors—such as aligning social care more closely with the NHS—and better recognises the contributions of women and BAME professionals," she explains. She calls for more initiatives, award ceremonies, and platforms that share success stories to uplift the entire sector.

Looking ahead, Sue Ann has clear plans. "I plan to finish the advanced leadership programme I started with my team and explore further collaborations with care associations," she shares. Her goal is to continue improving support for staff, highlight the successes of social care, and contribute to a more inclusive and innovative industry. As a published author, she also looks forward to sharing more of her creative work and personal reflections to inspire others in the field.

Final Reflections

Sue Ann Nnamani's journey is a powerful example of how dedication and clear leadership can transform care. She serves as an inspiration for anyone working in social care. By staying true to her roots and embracing both innovation and tradition, Sue Ann shows us that when we support each other, we can build a better future for everyone in the sector.