

## What it means to be a Care Worker by Abigail Doodney at Sonya Lodge



As a family-run company since 1988, Nellsar Care Homes couldn't care for their 600+ residents without their dedicated frontline team of Care Workers. From Nurses to Domestic Assistants, from Care Assistants to Laundry Assistants, from Business Support Officers to Recreation Well-Being Coordinators, and Catering Teams to Maintenance and Management teams – each and every member staff member is highly valued and appreciated. We wouldn't be one of the UK's top Care Providers without them.

What's in a job title? Read on to hear directly from **Abigail Doodney, Head of Care at Sonya Lodge Residential Care Home**, when we asked her, "How long have you worked in the Care industry and what does being a Care Worker mean to you?", "How has working through the COVID-19 pandemic been for you?", "What challenges has it brought and what valuable lessons have you learnt?", "What do you most enjoy about your work and what have been your greatest care-related achievements?"

"I have had the privilege of working at **Sonya Lodge** for six and a half years. I started off as a **Carer** and from the day I started (our recently retired Manager) **Jean Wright** used to say she could see potential in me. I went on maternity leave in 2016 and before I left, I was approached by Jean who asked if I would like to come back from maternity leave as a Senior; I jumped at the opportunity.

*In April 2020, Jean approached me again to say that a new position was available for **Head of Care** (days); she felt I would really suit the position and said that I should apply. So, I did and I got the job – which I'm really grateful for! I have come across many challenges over the years that I never thought I would, but I really love my job and I am very passionate about it. I love caring for all the residents – it really brightens my day to put a smile on their face, sometimes just by doing simple things like giving them a hug or a cup tea (our residents love a cup of tea!).*

*Working through the **pandemic** has been very challenging because at the start of it, we had a lot of staff go off sick; staff had to do more hours (including me) which has been very tiring for all. The increased workload has put more pressure on the senior members of staff as we have to make sure that **twice-daily temperatures** are taken from our residents, and temperatures are taken from staff members every time they come on shift.*

*We have been very lucky to not have any **COVID-19** in our **Home**; this makes me very proud as it's a big achievement from all members of staff. I have learnt that **Sonya Lodge** is an **amazing Home** and we can fight anything that's ahead of us as a team. As a **Home**, we are very grateful for how the **Nellsar management team** have looked after us with all the **PPE** we need.*

*I enjoy every day at **Sonya Lodge**; all staff are very positive, bubbly and friendly. Families have placed their loved ones with us as who were unable to see their Mum or Dad throughout the **pandemic**, choosing us to take care of their family in their absence. We are like a second family to them, which I think is so lovely, as I feel we do have a **family-feel** to the **Home**. Also, in the past, we have had residents deemed to be at the end of their life in hospital move into **Sonya Lodge**. Through the encouragement and dedication of our staff, we can give each person the best possible quality of life.*

*My greatest care-related achievements have got to be simply making the residents feel like this is home and seeing them all happy and content here. Through working as a **Carer** at such a lovely **Home**, I have gained a lot of knowledge. In 2016, my grandad became very poorly with cancer and our whole family's wish was for me and my sister (who is also a Carer) to look after him when he was coming towards the end of his life, which we did. I feel that **Sonya Lodge** gave me the confidence to do this through my experience. Every day is a great achievement working within a **Care Home** – it can be very hard at times but it's a very rewarding job."*