

Involving key stakeholders



This section outlines how to identify, understand and engage key stakeholders, ensuring their needs shape service design, communication remains open and relationships inform continuous improvement.

Be Caring embedded stakeholder involvement throughout its transformation, recognising that lasting change requires collaboration. A wide range of voices, from care workers and operational leads to commissioners, people and community partners, were continuously engaged through representative forums, informal sessions and co-produced contracts.

Early engagement with commissioners ensured alignment on values and service design. From here, Be Caring built trust with commissioners through transparency, shared decision-making and responsive communication. Initiatives like the trusted assessor model and neighbourhood-based care were shaped by stakeholder input and strengthened through multidisciplinary collaboration.

This section is split into the following topics:

- identifying key stakeholders
- understanding stakeholder needs
- partnering with commissioners
- building on these relationships
- proposing the approach to other commissioners
- key decisions, key learning and advice, recommendations.



Identifying key stakeholders

“We’ve had to build relationships one by one with each Commissioner. These relationships have transformed things.”

Sharon Lowrie, Chief Executive Officer, Be Caring

Be Caring’s transformation was guided by a deliberate and inclusive stakeholder strategy. Recognising that sustainable change required broad-based support, the organisation engaged a wide range of internal and external stakeholders from the outset.

Internally, leadership prioritised collaboration with senior managers, operational leads and employee representatives. As an employee-owned organisation, Be Caring ensured its 850 frontline care workers were actively involved through formal employee representative opportunities, creating internal ownership and alignment. Staff forums and informal sessions helped build trust and co-ownership, ensuring that the voices of those delivering care were central to the transformation process.

Convinced by the success of early piloting, Be Caring engaged their Leeds commissioner and secured agreement to a more formal pilot. As they expanded beyond Leeds, commissioners from Manchester, Newcastle, Bradford and Sheffield were identified as key partners. Long-term relationship-building helped align values and expectations ahead of formal tenders. Health professionals, including social workers, nurses and GPs, played a vital role in co-delivering care through integrated neighbourhood teams. External collaboration with commissioners and community groups helped shape service delivery and embed local priorities.

People and families were central to service design, especially through the trusted assessor model, which ensures care packages reflect lived experience. Community organisations and national partners like the GMB Union and Employee Ownership Association contributed to advocacy and sector-wide learning.

This inclusive approach laid the foundation for meaningful, values-driven transformation.

Understanding stakeholder needs

“Commissioners want to avoid complaints, safeguarding issues and concerns... our model helps achieve that.”

Laura Mwamba, Director of Business Development and Innovation, Be Caring

“We had care workers going all across the city... spending far too much time in cars and not enough time in front of the people. That wasn't efficient for providers and did not support workforce retention”

Paul Higginbottom, Service Manager, Sheffield City Council

By actively involving carers, people, families, health professionals, commissioners and community partners, Be Caring has built a care system that is not only person-centred but also operationally effective and financially sustainable.

Carers are empowered to share insights through structured and informal channels. They are treated as experts in their client's lives, with their insights gathered through supervision, surveys and informal feedback. Staff consistently report their feedback is acted upon, embedding trust and improvement. This co-designed approach leads to better outcomes and higher satisfaction, with empowered staff and people at the heart of service delivery.

People and families are equally central to Be Caring's approach. The organisation supports people in co-designing their care and contributing to the development of local services. Be Caring creates inclusive opportunities for people to actively shape services through Citizen Involvement Groups, co-deliver training as Experts by Experience and contribute to research via other partnerships.

In some locations, regular multidisciplinary meetings and direct communication channels enable faster responses to client needs and better coordination across services. Transparent reporting and collaborative planning have also helped build commissioner confidence, reducing risk and strengthening trust.

Be Caring's approach to understanding stakeholder needs is embedded in its culture and daily practice. It's a continuous process of listening, learning and evolving.

Partnering with commissioners

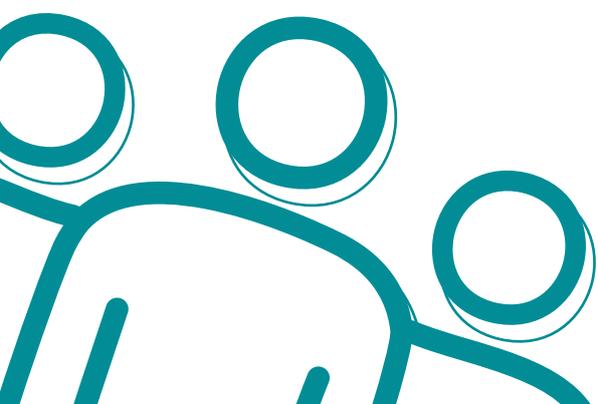
“With Be Caring, we were able to have very frank conversations, very open, very honest, develop a trust. That allowed us to run a risk of doing something slightly different which has been fruitful.”

Paul Bickerton, Head of Commissioning, Care Homes, Homecare and Quality, Manchester Local Care Organisation

Be Caring’s approach to adult social care commissioning is rooted in partnership rather than transaction. Across multiple regions, the organisation has worked closely with commissioners to co-design care that is person-centred and outcome-driven. These relationships are built on open dialogue, enabling both parties to challenge outdated practices and explore innovative solutions.

Be Caring’s engagement with commissioners goes beyond delivery. The organisation actively collaborates on market engagement, contract design and tender processes. Where contract terms do not support fair pay for the care workforce, Be Caring challenges them constructively. One key area of reform has been the shift away from pay per visit. Be Caring initiated conversations with commissioners about the limitations of this model, encouraging more sustainable workforce practices and fairer pay for care workers. The payment is still per call (except Newcastle) but retainer payments help Be Caring implement their model.

Collaborative pilots have shown how innovation can thrive when providers and commissioners work together. These initiatives have helped streamlined assessments, delegated responsibilities and improved responsiveness to individual needs. Crucially, they are not isolated experiments, but strategic tools aligned with local priorities and scalable to other services. They demonstrate how co-designed services can drive meaningful, system-wide change.



Commissioners require assurance that services deliver value for money and measurable outcomes. Be Caring meets this need through robust data collection and transparent reporting. By tracking time spent with people, travel time and care outcomes, the organisation provides clear insights into service effectiveness. In one region, productivity increased by over 25%, while costs were reduced through smarter rota planning and right-sizing of care packages. This data transparency builds trust and informs commissioning decisions, strengthening confidence in Be Caring's model.

Be Caring's collaborative model of working in partnership with commissioners shows that with trust, transparency and shared ambition, adult social care commissioning can evolve to deliver better outcomes for people, providers and commissioners alike.

“We didn't just design the contract in isolation. We worked with providers as part of the market engagement for example to understand what size of weekly contract hours were most sustainable and built that into our commissioning model.”

Paul Higginbottom, Service Manager, Sheffield City Council

Building on these relationships

“We speak daily with social workers, district nurses and GPs. We’ve got their direct lines and they can contact us for anything. We’ve had social workers come in, shared our training with them and helped them understand the hands-on aspects of care.”

Derri Hall, Client Support Manager, Be Caring

Be Caring’s approach to homecare is grounded in cultivating relationships that go beyond consultation.

Rather than treating engagement as a one-off event, Be Caring embeds collaboration into every stage of service design and delivery. Through regular dialogue, joint evaluations and inclusive feedback mechanisms, the organisation transforms stakeholder input into tangible improvements.

This approach has enabled Be Caring to adapt to changing needs, challenge traditional models and pioneer new approaches to sustainable care. A small sample of recent regional pilots demonstrate how these relationships have created opportunities to do things differently:

- **Manchester – ‘Trusted Assessor Pilot’** - Enables real-time care package adjustments through collaboration with social workers and quality teams, improving accuracy and resource use. Now embedded into wider service design.
- **Sheffield – ‘Community wellbeing service’** - A 10-year contract supports neighbourhood-based care, with monthly meetings enabling rapid responses and improved continuity.
- **Bradford – ‘Outcomes innovation pilot’** - Six innovation sites explore outcomes, delegated healthcare and technology. Evaluation by the Bradford Research Institute ensures sector-wide learning.

Through these initiatives, Be Caring has shown that strong stakeholder relationships are a catalyst for innovation and improvement.

Proposing the approach to other commissioners

In preparation for rolling out a new care delivery model, Be Caring presented a proposal to one of its commissioners aimed at improving workforce stability, service quality and financial sustainability. The proposal, based on April 2023 data, outlined a values-led approach to workforce investment, including paying carers for their full time at work, regardless of cancellations or client deaths. Pay rates were set at £10.90/hour for walkers and £11.50/hour for drivers, with additional paid time for training, travel, and “above and beyond” activities. This approach was designed to support work-life balance, improve retention, and ensure carers felt valued.

Operational transparency was a key feature of the proposal. Be Caring committed to sharing detailed data every four weeks, including hours paid versus invoiced, breakdowns of carer time and open-book accounting to demonstrate value for money. Performance improvements were also targeted, such as a 10% increase in visit duration and enhanced continuity of care. Longer average carer tenure was expected to improve service quality and consistency.

To support the case, Be Caring presented comparative data from a similar service, showing improved outcomes: higher average call durations (38 minutes vs. 30), lower cost of contact time, and longer carer tenure (2.4 years vs. 1.7). These results helped build trust with commissioners and demonstrated the potential for more flexible, responsive commissioning. The proposal reflected Be Caring’s commitment to transparency, workforce wellbeing and data-driven service improvement.



Key decisions

- Built long-term relationships with commissioners before tenders to align values and influence contract design.
- Introduced trusted assessor model with local authorities to co-review and right-size care packages.
- Established direct communication channels with health professionals to enable rapid, co-ordinated responses.
- Embedded client and family input into care reviews, ensuring changes were person-centred and consented.
- Built a clear pay model and shared detailed breakdowns of paid time to show how fair wages support retention, improve care quality and offer value for money - helping to build commissioner confidence.

Key learning

“Through this pilot with Be Caring, we changed the terms and conditions of our contract. It’s fundamentally shifted how we’ll commission in the future.”

Paul Bickerton, Head of Commissioning, Care Homes, Homecare and Quality, Manchester Local Care Organisation

Be Caring treats stakeholder engagement as a continuous, two-way partnership. By building long-term relationships with commissioners, involving staff and people in decision-making and maintaining open communication with health and community partners, they’ve created a person-centred, sustainable model. Their trusted assessor model, neighbourhood-based working and co-designed services show how trust and shared values lead to better outcomes and efficient resource use. When stakeholders feel heard and respected, they’re more likely to support innovation and drive continuous improvement.



Recommendations for providers

A checklist of practical recommendations and resources to help providers to adapt and adopt similar informed by this building block section.

Recommendations for commissioners

A checklist of practical recommendations for commissioners to help adopt some or all of the approach used by Be Caring's commissioners.