

Caregivers' Forum

Meeting Notes | Thursday 22 May 2025, 1pm UK time

Meeting 03.

Attended

From IPWSO: Shelly Cordner (UK), Tony Holland (UK)

From IPWSO's PPC Board: Neil Gumley (Australia), Patrice Carroll (USA), Lynn Garrick (USA), Myles Kelly (UK)

Caregiver Delegates: Bastian Bühler (Switzerland), Kim Herivel (Australia), Lynsey Moorehouse (Ireland)

Other Forum Members attending the meeting represented Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, UK, USA

21 people in total attended.

Please note in accordance with [IPWSO's Privacy Policy](#) we do not release the Zoom recording of the meeting, or list the names of general Forum Members without their express permission. PPCB and Caregiver Delegates have given advance permission to have their names listed in the Forum.

Members should contact Shelly Cordner scordner@ipwso.org in the first instance if they wish to connect with specific Forum Members over email.

Agenda

1pm: Welcome to the Forum

Shelly gave a short welcome and housekeeping introduction. Topic of ***Embracing cultural diversity in PWS residential care.***

1:05pm: Lynsey Moorehouse, RNID, BNS, Regional Operations Manager at PWS Resilience Healthcare in Ireland

[Lynsey's Presentation, Embracing Cultural Diversity in PWS Residential Services is available to watch here.](#)

Summary:

- Severe post-COVID staffing shortages in Ireland's care sector.
- Resilience Healthcare needed to maintain quality services amid domestic recruitment challenges.

International Recruitment Initiative:

- Partnered with Recruitment organisation to hire qualified care workers from South Africa.
- Required qualifications, English fluency, and cultural fit were critical criteria.
- Extensive support provided for relocation, visa, accommodation, and local integration.

Onboarding & Training:

- Tailored induction with area orientation, compliance training, and cultural acclimatisation.
- Specialised training in PWS care, including nutrition, behaviour support, and communication.
- Driving lessons and local navigation support due to different licensing systems.

Retention & Integration Strategies:

- Emotional and social support through Employee Assistance Programme, peer grouping, and team-building.
- Transparent communication and mentorship structures.
- Addressed cultural differences with inclusive team practices and ongoing dialogue.

Challenges Managed:

- Cultural misunderstandings and communication styles.
- Occasional pushback from residents or families based on bias or unfamiliarity.
- Adjusted leave policies and ensured fairness across domestic and international staff.

Outcomes & Benefits:

- Expanded PWS services (from 2 to 40 clients over 5.5 years).
- Improved staffing levels and service quality.
- Enhanced team diversity, collaboration, and cultural competence.
- Reduced turnover, increased satisfaction, and better continuity of care.

Discussion Highlights:

- Attendees praised the innovative approach and discussed its relevance to staffing crises globally.
- Several participants, particularly from Australia and Denmark, shared similar challenges and concerns:
 - Legal and visa limitations for recruiting overseas.
 - Cultural barriers (e.g., food customs, stigma around disabilities).
 - Potential discrimination based on race or nationality.
- Lindsay shared approaches to handling discrimination sensitively but firmly.
- Emphasis was placed on cultural training, communication improvement, and peer support.

1:25pm: Open Forum Discussion (on cultural diversity)**Staff Retention and Movement**

- **Retention Results:** Lindsay shared that staff brought in from South Africa are on fixed contracts tied to their visas, helping ensure retention for a set period. Only one staff member in PWS services had returned home due to personal reasons.

- **Fit and Flexibility:** Resilience carefully places staff based on preferences (e.g., adults vs. children, behaviours of concern). If someone finds PWS not suitable, they can be moved to another service.
- **Staff Motivation:** Those relocating from overseas are often highly motivated and resilient, having made a major life decision to move abroad.

Cultural Adaptation and Differences

- **Biggest Shift: Person-Centered Care**
 - New recruits often came from systems where care was more clinical and task-oriented.
 - Lindsay emphasised training them to think creatively and empathetically, empowering them to engage in individualised care planning and activities.
 - Assistant key worker roles helped bridge the learning gap before assigning full responsibilities.
- **Communication Challenges:**
 - Team meetings, supervisions, and extra language and documentation training were used to improve clarity and expectations.
 - Staff were coached to adjust tone and volume (as some cultural norms involve more direct or louder communication).
 - Emphasis on slowing down speech and actively listening to ensure mutual understanding.
- **Team Integration:**
 - Multiple staff from the same region were placed together to support one another but were also encouraged to integrate fully into diverse teams.
 - Intentional team-building and inclusive activities helped prevent siloing or cliques.

Sensitive Cultural & Racial Issues

- **Discrimination Concerns:**
 - A few instances of discriminatory behaviour or feedback from families and residents were acknowledged.
 - Example: A family requesting a staff member be removed without basis, likely due to skin colour. The issue was handled through a respectful but firm conversation with the family and support for the staff member.
 - Internal training emphasized empathy, open conversations, and clear expectations about inclusive behaviour.
- **Resident Comments:**
 - Residents with PWS can be very direct; staff are coached not to take comments personally, with context and behavioural understanding shared to mitigate hurtful misunderstandings.

Global Challenges and Relevance

- **Australian Context:**
 - Participants noted similar struggles with staff burnout and turnover in PWS group homes.

- Visa and recruitment hurdles: Australia's "area of need" classification complicates overseas hiring. Disability support is often not classified as a high-need profession.
- One participant described success with Irish backpackers, who tend to integrate well and be highly engaged.
- **Legal & Safety Concerns for Migrants:**
 - Shared case from Nigeria: Staff were fearful of engaging in public or legal matters due to traumatic past experiences with government authority.
 - Legal action was taken to protect their privacy by redacting identifiable names from public documents.

Workforce Development Strategies

- **Apprenticeship Program (Work-Earn-Learn):**
 - Resilience offers entry-level positions with paid training for underqualified domestic candidates.
 - Helps attract mature, life-experienced staff from non-care backgrounds (e.g., former chefs, musicians).
 - Staff commit to staying with the organisation for a period post-qualification.
- **Future Recruitment Plans:**
 - Due to changes in Irish visa procedures, Resilience is now exploring recruitment from other European countries to avoid new bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Suggestions and Brainstorming:**
 - One organisation proposed paying a bonus or allowance for working in high-needs homes like those for PWS to encourage stability and reward specialisation.
 - Others agreed, noting the emotional toll and need for continuity of care in PWS settings, but also raised concerns about navigating funding and regulations (especially under systems like the Australian NDIS).
- **Call for Collaboration:**
 - Participants were encouraged to share their own initiatives and challenges to foster mutual learning.

2:10pm: What Topics Would You Like to Discuss at Future Meetings?

- Ageing in PWS – currently always high on the agenda

8:25: Close and Thank you

The next meeting of the Caregiver's Forum is scheduled for **Thursday 25 September, 8pm London, UK time**. Topic will be announced soon.

For detail on upcoming IPWSO events visit: <https://ipwso.org/news-events/>