



Case study

Philippa Thompson started working in the social care sector in January 2011. She is a committed and career-minded professional and at the age of 46, has progressed to become CEO of the Independent Living Association (ILA), a user-led charity that helps people with care needs to live independently and to maintain their independence.

Philippa Thompson

Chief Executive Officer,
Independent Living Association

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I care...

Background

Philippa's experience extends across the public, private and third sectors. She worked in the healthcare sector as director of the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) for five years. She has been able to apply her extensive knowledge to her current role, particularly as health and social care becomes more integrated in terms of its supporting systems and processes.

Career progression

Philippa started her career in local government at West Sussex County Council, where she specialised in consumer advice, information and education. Previous roles include head of consumer affairs at BT and director of development at a children's charity, plus five years at SEAP (Support, Empower, Advocate and Promote) which provides specialist advocacy services. Philippa has a law degree and an MBA.





A role in social care

As well as overseeing the day-to-day operational side of the business and leading a team of over 50 office and home-based employees, Philippa's CEO role entails managing the strategic development of the ILA. She monitors social care market trends, considers where value can be added and how services can be developed to support the needs of her customers.

Philippa is hands-on and works hard to nurture relationships with local authorities, NHS Trusts, government bodies and other CEOs, representing people with disabilities. Philippa also oversees ILA's Lend a Hand business, a domestic and personal care agency that is able to raise surplus funds to be reinvested in the charity. It is run by four full-time staff and up to 20 care support workers that deliver care in people's homes.

Philippa works with a small leadership team focusing on strategic and operational development including internal and external communications, events, customer consultation, plus supporting customers to receive direct payments. She thoroughly enjoys working in social care and embraces the many challenges that it brings. Philippa's team of motivated care workers and home-based personal advisers support disabled people in their homes. She feels very much part of the team.

“Every day is different. It's about being responsive, driving change and development.”

Although relatively new to the social care sector, Philippa has found customer and employee satisfaction by far the most rewarding part of her role. It is also challenging in terms of keeping abreast of developments and getting the balance right between internal and external business needs. In her role, Philippa needs to be aware of the commercial environment in which the charity operates, particularly as the economic climate remains challenging.

“I love working with people in an environment where we can see the results of what we do.”



Ongoing support

Philippa has been delighted with the ongoing training support available in the social care sector to ensure the workforce is well qualified and skilled.

“I think there’s a lot of value in having a clear career path in health and social care. I want to instill a lifelong learning culture here and support the development of the next generation of care workers.”

As a CEO, Philippa also gets a great deal of support from ILA's board of trustees and other support networks including the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Sector Organisations (ACEVO). She is able to gain and share knowledge and information on key strategic and management issues faced by similar organisations.

Philippa carries out a lot of self-awareness training and took part in a new CEO development course. She has also taken part in mental health, child protection and adult safeguarding training.

For the future, Philippa wants to continue to make a positive impact. She enjoys making a difference in a relatively small organisation where personal interaction is key.

“I would recommend a career in social care as it’s very fulfilling. I particularly enjoy seeing the results of what we do, enabling our customers to maintain independence for longer and empowering them to make life choices. I like making that kind of a difference.”

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