

A HIGHLY COMMENDED MAGAZINE

Connect[®]

WINTER
ISSUE | 18

Meet
Charlotte!
Learn more about
our Face of
Connect on
p. 7

Strengthening operations and reinforcing our commitment to Wales and to our customers.

Find out more about our new distribution centre on p. 35

Do you ever experience leaks or sore skin around your stoma? Find out how a small change can make a big difference with our eakin[®] seals on p. 47

"Speaking with people who understand how to use the products and also how stomas work, in my opinion makes me feel seen, heard and understood. Especially at a time when having a cancer diagnosis is a lot to get your head around"

Read Amy's story on p.19

This is Keith... He's Family.

Keith has been an ostomate for 10 years. He loves the new Pelican ModaVi bag, he is a bus driver for First Cymru Buses and loves to bake in his spare time.

"Everything is on time, everything is in perfect condition, I am one happy ostomate."

Joining Respond has never been so easy, get in touch today and let us do the rest!
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Providing NHS services

A message from

the Editor



Natalie Jones

Brand Executive

Hello, and a very warm welcome to our winter edition of Connect. We hope you have had a lovely autumn and are looking forward to the season ahead.

As we head into our 18th issue, we are pleased to bring you the last installment of our 'It's a Family Thing' campaign with Q+As with our lovely ambassadors, Phillipa and Chris, more inspiring real-life stories, company updates and mouth-watering recipes. Our social committee, **Belong**, has been very busy over the past couple of months, and we share the ways we celebrated National Customer Service week and our 8th birthday!

We also share more about our Group product offering and how eakin® seals can help with a range of ostomy problems such as leaks, bag adhesion, and with retracted stomas. Head to p.47 to find out more and to try a seal today!

*As always, I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoy creating this for you.
Thank you as always for taking the time to read,*

Natalie



Call:

0800 220 300
0800 028 6848 (N.Ireland)



Email:

marketing@respond.co.uk



Or, write to us at:

Freeport RTSZ-SLYE-EBTL
Respond Healthcare Ltd,
Greypoint Cardiff Business Park,
Parc Ty Glas, Cardiff, CF14 5WF

We'd love to hear from you...

Do you have a question? Feedback? Have a story to tell? A subject you'd like to see covered in the next issue? – If this is the case, we'd love to hear from you!

Get in touch with us today via one of the options above

Would you like to feature in Connect®?

We are so proud to be able to share our customers' stories, we know how much they mean to our readers who may also be experiencing the same things, and we'd like to hear from you too!

Do you have a story to share with us? An experience you've had with your stoma? Or perhaps you'd like to share your thoughts with us on our service?

Get in touch today for the chance to be included in future editions of Connect® by emailing us at

marketing@respond.co.uk



What's inside issue 18?

Service

In this issue we share what Phillipa and Chris think of our service and what it means to them to be our ambassadors. You can also learn more about our 'Face of Connect', Charlotte on p. 7!

We also spoke with our Director of Development, Dr. Martin Crockard, to find out more about his role in our Research and Development team and his interests and hobbies. Head to p. 9 to find out more.

Pages 6-15

Events

Head to p.16 to read all about our experience at the 2023 Association of Stoma Care Nurses conference in Brighton, where we were proud to host an educational dinner with stoma nurses across the UK and joined by the lovely Ant and Summer to share their insight on our products and services.

Pages 16-18

Real life

In this issue we share stories and experiences from our customers Amy, Mohammad, and Sally.

They each open up about their diagnosis' and important issues they have faced during their stoma journeys.

Find out more from p. 19.

Pages 19-30

Company news

We have a LOT of exciting updates and news to share with you in this issue! From celebrating birthdays, charity fundraising with our Belong social committee, celebrating National Customer Service Week with our incredible care teams, and the opening of our new Cardiff Distribution Centre and MUCH more, there's plenty for you to catch up on from p. 31.

Pages 31-44

Product

Do you ever experience leaks or sore skin around your stoma? Head over to p.47 to read our series of articles and how eakin® seals can help make a big difference against leaks.

Pages 46-50

Online

Self-care is imperative for physical and mental wellness, and in this issue Amy shares insight into her self-care with a chronic illness and stoma, and her top tips to help you break down any barriers you may face when practicing self-care. Head to p. 51 to read more.

Head to p. 55 to catch up on more of our recent blogs, covering topics like pancaking, leaks, and thoughts on our service, and then on p. 58 you can catch up on our latest podcast episodes!

Pages 51-58

Meet the Family...

Phillipa has been an ambassador for Respond for over a year now, so we wanted to chat to her all about how she finds our service and how it feels like one big family.



Tell us about yourself

My name is Phillipa, but I go by Pip. I'm twenty-seven years old and live in Merseyside – just over the water from Liverpool. I've had my stoma for almost three years now due to Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis.

What do you think makes a great service?

Reliability. I also think you have got to have a good bond with your client or customer. A quick service is also really important.

How long have you been using the Respond service?

I've been using Respond since August 2021. My stoma nurse recommended them. I was using another company before, but the Respond service was a lot more reliable for me.

What is it about the Respond service you like?

I love how kind everyone is and how reliable the service is. When I'm ringing up to place an order, they make me feel at ease and I trust that all my supplies are in good hands. The team are very responsive and caring.

What 3 words would you use to describe Respond?

Reliable, responsive, and kind.

What does it mean to you to be a part of the Respond ambassador programme and family?

It means everything to me. Absolutely everything. When Respond first got in touch with me, it honestly made me so happy and it was great after having such a tough year – it couldn't have made things better. We are all just like one big family and finally being able to meet up with everyone is amazing. It feels like because you've seen everyone on social media you really know them, and it's like seeing family you haven't seen for years. I love it. I'm so grateful for all of the friends I have made through Respond and get to call a lot of them my now best friends for life!

What would you say to someone who was looking to change their service?

Do it. Come to Respond. They are reliable and the loveliest people!

Tell us 3 things we don't know about you?

Okay, so I'm a crazy cat lover. I absolutely love my cats. I'm also 5'2, not a lot of people seem to realise that when they see me! Lastly, I've danced all of my life, from a baby up until I was 18 years old.

Face of Connect

Charlotte



My name is Charlotte, I am 32 and have a pretty busy life - I'm a very proud mum, I work full-time and I love holidays, socialising and spending time with family and friends. I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, age 18 and after years of battling with Crohn's and trying different treatments, on my 30th birthday I went for surgery to have my permanent stoma/ileostomy formed. Having my stoma has improved my quality of life so much and I can once again enjoy all of the little important things.

Head over to Charlotte's Instagram [@crohnsftwilson](https://www.instagram.com/crohnsftwilson) to keep up to date with her stoma journey!



Starter

Hearty winter vegetable soup

Prep time: 5 mins

Cooking time: 20 mins

Serves: 4

Top Tip

Please be aware that Haricot beans (found in the mixed beans cans) can cause some GI (Gastrointestinal Tract) discomfort – try soaking them overnight in water

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 swede, peeled and cut into chunks
- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- 3 sprigs thyme, leaves removed and roughly chopped
- 850ml vegetable stock
- 500ml semi-skimmed milk
- 2 x 410g cans mixed beans in water, drained



Recipe card

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/hearty-winter-veg-soup>

Method:



STEP 1

Heat the oil in a large saucepan, then gently soften the garlic without colouring. Tip in the swede, carrots and two-thirds of the thyme, then pour in the stock and milk. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 15 mins.

STEP 2

Ladle a third of the soup into a blender, whizz until smooth, then pour back into the pan along with the beans. Check for seasoning, then return to the heat and warm through. Serve sprinkled with the remaining thyme and some warm, crusty bread rolls.

A Day in the Life of Dr. Martin Crockard

Director of Development



1. How long have you been in your role?

I joined Eakin Healthcare four years ago, having been Molecular Diagnostics Manager at Randox for the previous 18 years. I wanted a new challenge in a company that promoted values I believed in. Eakin was and remains a great fit.

2. What does a day in the life of Director of Development look like? Describe a typical day.

I usually get to the same "hot" desk for 07.45am then re-prioritise my to-do list based on what I achieved the day before and what else has been added to it. I try to knock out a couple of quick wins from my

list before the day's meetings start. Because our Development team (and R&D in general) are progressing on multiple new products, there are lots of exciting projects to discuss and issues to resolve, so while sitting through a day of meetings may sound a bit tedious, there's always plenty to learn and it reminds me of the breadth of talent we have within the Eakin Healthcare community. I try to maintain a no-meetings Wednesday every week, to allow space to get larger pieces of work completed. It works sometimes!

3. What are your favourite things about your job?

Working with the great people we have, specifically within my Development Team. I have 3 gifted managers in Ben Mahood, Richard O'Shaughnessy and Jonathan Gilkes and since I joined, we have built a highly professional and motivated team of scientists and engineers to drive new product development and business growth. Across the business too, Eakin Healthcare has a pool of exceptional talent and it is a real pleasure getting to work with more of our experts across all levels of the business. Everyone has an insight and a part to play, so it's great to tap into their wisdom.

4. What makes you feel proud about working for Eakin Healthcare?

The key for me is the focus on the end user of our medical devices. When we design new products, we exploit the research and evidence gained from our innovation and insights teams. We speak to people who live their lives with our devices and services, so we can develop products to make their lives better and give them the dignity they deserve. That gets me up in the morning!

5. Biggest achievement in current role to date?

I'm going to push this a bit and mention four!

From The Development Team's perspective, it has to be ModaVi, Freeseal and REFRESH. While I was part of the team that delivered these very successful new products, my role was to ensure they had

everything they needed to bring their brilliant work to our customers, so credit belongs to the Development team, R&D collectively and the ostomy commercial team who had faith in our vision.

The impact of REFRESH provides a great example of what we aspire to. Combining three important elements in a stoma change routine simplifies the process, reduces the number of accessories required and reduces waste, all without compromising the individual functions of adhesive removal, barrier and fragrance.

Personally, my biggest achievement has been the recent creation of the Ostomy Centre of Excellence, including gaining over £4M grant support from Invest N. Ireland. This will support our ambitious infrastructure and ostomy product development

plans to drive business growth and satisfy the needs of ostomates globally. Of course, I did not do this in isolation and one of the most satisfying parts of creating the Centre of Excellence was the willing support and endorsement I received across the Eakin Healthcare business.

You can find out more about this exciting achievement on p. 43!

6. The biggest challenge?

Spinning plates! I consider the Development Team to be service providers for all parts of the business but we cannot meet all the requests we get for support. In buckets, we have new product development, which is what we tend to be judged on, then we have product support, such as a design or material change to an existing device, Medical Device Regulation (MDR) compliance, which has required significant resource from my team and finally, business support, where we generate additional evidence to support product claims or provide expertise and advice. My challenge is to agree the priorities of requests with stakeholders and assign tasks to those best suited



'Opening the Ostomy Centre of Excellence with Invest Northern Ireland'

to deliver the required endpoint. I also need to ensure everyone in my team has stimulating and rewarding work, so there's a balance to be struck there too.

7. What is the most important personal attribute you bring to your job?

Belief in our ability to improve lives and the determination to see the job done. I know that's two attributes but one doesn't work without the other. Technical ability lies within my team, so with belief and determination, I help harness this to deliver the best possible products and services for the business and our users.

8. What advice would you give to someone aspiring to get into your field of work?

A ship is safe in a harbour but that's not what ships are built for! Surround yourself with good people who share your passion and learn together. Push yourself and don't be afraid to fail but make sure you learn from it and lastly, there's no substitute for hard work to get stuff done.

9. How would your friends describe you?

Missing! I have great friends who tolerate me not making more of an effort, so it's on my personal to-do list to spend more quality time with friends and family.

10. Biggest passion or hobby outside work?

Farming, which partly explains the answer to the last question! My wife, Karen, son, Max and I have a small farm near home where we rear cows and calves (Sucklers for those who have watched Clarkson's Farm!). Karen also runs her family dairy farm in Bangor and diversified two years ago to set up a milk, baked goods and coffee vending station, so that keeps Karen busy 7 days a week and Max and I at weekends. I see it as a privilege that as a family,

we can enjoy farming together, while the vending outlet has brought a really nice community spirit to Ballycrochan dairy farm.

11. What does your perfect weekend look like?

The way my week is structured, I take Friday afternoons off; this is precious me-time, where I can do as I wish. Could be walking over our fields, fixing something or a mini-project. Friday night would see Karen, Max and I at one of our fabulous local gastro pubs, ideally sharing dinner and chat with friends. Saturday and Sunday usually involve farming but it's what we enjoy as a family, so that works for me. Beautiful Strangford Lough is on our doorstep and if the chance arises, it would be rude not to spend



Service

some time kayaking or being close to the water. Equally, the Mourne Mountains are nearby and provide another amazing landscape to immerse yourself in. There's a consistent theme – outdoors with friends and family.

12. Which famous person would you most like to meet and what would you ask them?

Captain James Cook. Widely acknowledged as one of the first and greatest European explorers, who combined outstanding seafaring with scientific discovery, he was also a great leader. So many questions come to mind about

charting New Zealand and Australia, but the opening query would be how he persuaded a crew of seamen, scientists and artists to join him on a 30m long coal-ship (Endeavour) to sail beyond maps in search of lands that may not exist and how he was able to maintain their loyalty throughout his 3 year voyage.



'Our wonderful R&D team'

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Connect

We also produce a highly commended quarterly magazine for our customers



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Meet the Family...

We decided to sit down with Chris and asked him why he joined the service, and how it feels like one big family.

Tell us about yourself

Hi, I'm Chris Turner. I'm from Bedfordshire. I'm almost forty-eight years old and I live with my wife, Rachel. I've got two kids, four cats, and a dog. I've had my stoma for six years. The reason I had to have my stoma was because of Crohn's Disease and it just caused too many problems. So, in the end, I said to the surgical team "enough is enough, take it out and give me a stoma."

What do you think makes a great service?

For me, great service is about personal care. It's about really understanding the person, not just trying to sell your product or trying to show good customer service because you think you have to. It's about making people feel valued and feel like they're worthy. If someone shows me that level of care, I buy into that all day long, because that's what I want and that's how I treat people, so I expect it if I'm dealing with any business.

How long have you been using the Respond service?

About a year. Before that, I was using another service provider, and they were okay. But they didn't have that care element to put thought into you and help find the right products for you. So, that's when I contacted Respond and I joined the service after one phone call.



What is it about the Respond service you like?

The care. It's just speaking to someone and not feeling like they're reading a script. The team genuinely listen to everything you've got to say. Nothing feels rushed. I feel like I could talk on the phone to them for hours because they're just so open!

What would you say to someone who was looking to change their service?

If someone's looking to change their service, they must have their reasons as to why they'd want to do that. So, I'd likely ask a few questions to find out more, but I would say to ring Respond and have that one phone call. Whenever people ask me who I use straightaway I say, "just phone Respond and I can guarantee you you'll want to join."

Every person I've spoken to has always said the same thing about Respond. The team have always been super caring and super kind and can't do enough for you. And that's everything I want.

What three words would you use to describe Respond?

It's the thoughtfulness, the kindness and the care. By far the three best words for Respond. I think thoughtfulness comes into it a lot because you can almost hear them on the phone, trying to think of ways to help you and it's that thought process that I really appreciate.



What does it mean to you to be a part of the Respond ambassador programme and family?

It means everything to me. When I had my stoma six years ago, I never thought I'd be working with Respond. To find myself sitting here, being interviewed – I never expected it. But I know it's going to help other people and that's exactly why I'm doing it. If people can watch something that I do – this interview or anything else that I do – and it helps, then that's fantastic.

I was telling my wife this morning "they are one big family" and everyone that I've seen is so caring and happy to share their stories. Recently, as part of the ambassador programme, we had a tour around the Pelican Healthcare factory and that was incredible. It shows both Pelican and Respond Healthcare are trying to help people with stomas. It's fantastic.

Tell us 3 things that we don't know about you?

I've got four cats called Luna, Stella, Ziggy & Loki, and a cockapoo called Olive. I also review all different types of beers as well, from around the world, and have my own channel. Third thing...I'm struggling now.... I love pickled onion Monster Munch!

Association of Stoma Care Nurses (ASCN) UK Conference 2023

From the 8th-10th October 2023 we attended the ASCN conference in Brighton. The conference is the biggest stoma care event in the UK, where we got to mingle with nurses and others from the industry.

We were joined by our lovely ambassadors, Ant (@ibdlife) and Summer (@summers_stoma), who took part in our educational dinner held on the Sunday night, which focused on the importance of **eakin**® seal mouldability in creating a secure fit every time for ostomates. Presented with global case studies from nurses witnessing issues with seal mouldability, our guests had the opportunity to ask our team any questions and take part in a seal moulding challenge to demonstrate how flexible our range of seals are!

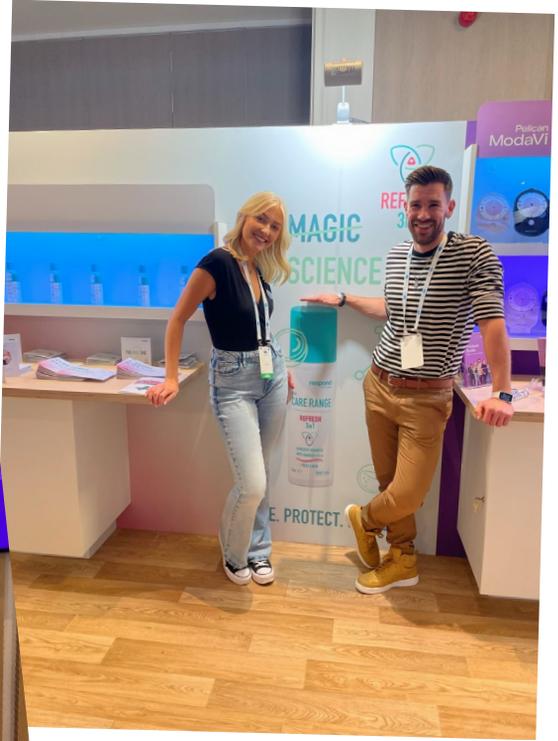
Ant and Summer then stayed with us on the stand on the Monday, speaking to stoma care nurses about their experiences with their stomas and products. It was wonderful to have them with us to share their insight.

Over the few days we spoke with nurses all over the UK about our latest products and home delivery service, and we were joined by our own wonderful team of Community Stoma Care Nurses, many of we're proud to say had their educational posters presented!

We are already looking forward to this year's joint conference with the World Council of Enterostomal Therapists (WCET) and ASCN in Glasgow, where we will have the opportunity to welcome our international colleagues and nurses through our sister company, Eakin.

Check out some of our photos from the conference and educational dinner on the next page:

Association of Stoma Care Nurses (ASCN) UK Conference 2023



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AND THOSE WITH AN INTERNAL POUCH**

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<https://iasupport.org/infoday24>



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My bowel cancer and stoma story

By Amy Vaughan

We recently spoke with Respond customer, Amy, who is 37 from Ballymena in Northern Ireland and had her stoma surgery in February 2023. Amy shares with us her stoma story and experience living with her colostomy so far.

I was diagnosed in January 2023 with bowel cancer with Metastasis into the liver, and was scheduled to have a bowel resection on 16th of February. I was told I would have a resection with the possibility of a stoma if things looked different during surgery, so I was preparing myself for either. On the 14th of February I ended up having my bowel surgery to remove the cancer due to a complete bowel obstruction, and was made aware by my surgeon I would require a stoma, due to the obstruction.

A stoma nurse came and spoke with me the day before surgery, she marked my stomach up as to where my stoma would be going and also discussed the products available for my stoma.

After my surgery I wanted to see my stoma as a positive, as once that section of my colon was removed that meant the cancer was also going from the descending colon - in my eyes my stoma was saving my life. After surgery I awoke and saw my stoma, yes, it was a little different, but aren't we all different? It would be a little boring if we all were the same!



That's the mindset I started to take in relation to my stoma. A couple of days after surgery I decided to name my stoma. I named it after Moira from the sitcom 'Schitt's Creek', as she likes to be dramatic and in the early days so did my stoma.

After I felt more alert post-surgery, the stoma nurse came to see me again and we discussed how to change my stoma bag etc., she also explained the amazing services Respond offer and the products available to me.

I have a little six year old, and I wanted to be as open and honest to her, as children that age are extremely inquisitive and ask a lot of questions.

Real life

From the day I got my stoma, and when I got home, I showed her the stoma in her time and discussed in a child-appropriate way why I needed one. I told her part of my bowel (where our poop goes) was broken and the Doctor has to remove it, so now I have something called a stoma.

She now calls it....."mummy's tummy bum" and in all honestly I love the name. We had a good laugh when she first called it that. She also finds it "pretty cool, Mum poops from her tummy bum". Children really are brilliant.

She also received a Bear called Buttomy Bear (from my stoma nurse in the hospital) along with a book, which was lovely and helped break the ice. My husband was able to read the book to her and discuss more.

I'm so glad Respond is the provider I was setup with, as they're honestly amazing. They're at the end of a phone call and I've built up a lovely rapport with one member of the amazing team. All the people I've spoken to on the phone are so informative and knowledgeable about the products and stomas themselves (even though the people I have spoken to, as far as I'm aware, don't have one).

Speaking with people who understand how to use the products and also how stomas work, in my opinion makes me feel seen, heard and understood. Especially at a time when having a cancer diagnosis is a lot to get your head around, then add in receiving a stoma.

During my Chemotherapy I found my output increased dramatically during the



first few days, which led to more bag changes. As my stoma is a colostomy, drainable bags don't really work for my output, (unless I've an upset stomach) which is why I mainly use closed bags and had to change my bags a lot more frequently, which led to the skin around my stoma being uncomfortable and sore. The wipes I use are amazing for that, soothing the skin and helping with the redness.

I'm now nine months post stoma surgery and I've been getting on brilliantly with my stoma, it does take some adjusting to, I would be lying if I said it didn't. I have to make sure I've always got a good supply of products when out and about, knowing where the restrooms are in case I need to change my pouch.

Respond are so fast with their delivery from when they receive my order. My bags are also precut! Gamechanger!!! I was unaware Respond offered this service, I was made aware on a phone call with a member of the team at Respond, around a month after surgery. This took the hassle out of having to sit in the evenings (which I had started to do) and cut bags in preparation for the coming days. Now my bags arrive precut and ready to wear, absolutely amazing. Thanks Respond!

Having a fabulous team who understand the products and who are warm and helpful when you phone is great. My stoma is here to stay, so I'm glad Respond are my team who supply my products.

During the last 9 months I've been raising awareness of my life with a stoma, I honestly didn't know a lot about a stoma until I myself had one. Raising awareness on how people of all ages from being young, old and every age in between can have a stoma is something I'm trying to do. While also giving an honest take on my experience of life with a stoma.

My stoma has saved my life and I look at it positively daily even when it decides to pass gas (fart) at inappropriate times! I do have to say, I do miss being able to go to the bathroom on my terms! My stoma now is in control of that.

I celebrate my stoma daily as it meant the cancer could be removed and I can live my life.

*Thank you for reading,
Amy x*



Embracing life's journey: My battle with colon cancer

By Mohammad Samad

Our lovely ambassador, Mohammad, has been busy recently writing some amazing blogs for us. From his experience battling colon cancer, to the importance of representation, we wanted to share with you his story and where you can read his blogs to find out more. Enjoy!

My first blog post for Respond was an introduction to my story of when I was diagnosed with colon cancer. Prior to this I was on a health craze, eating clean and exercising regularly, but – in October 2020 I felt a sharp stabbing pain in my lower abdomen. I had seen a doctor on 3 separate occasions, and I was diagnosed with IBS but later told it was more likely Crohn's Disease. During this time my father passed away from Covid-19, it was the first significant death in our family and prompted me to take my health issues more seriously and so I went back to my GP and demanded a blood test as my symptoms were worsening rapidly. After three blood tests and a stool test, I was referred to a specialist who arranged a colonoscopy.

During the procedure, I felt an intense stabbing sensation and I was given a



heavy dose of sedative, which knocked me unconscious. After waking up in a room all by myself, the consultant came in and said that they found a tumour in the same area of which I could feel the stabbing pains. Unfortunately, the result of the tumour confirmed it was cancerous. It was difficult to share the news with my wife and two children, at the time my daughter was 8 and my son was 7. But they gave me a focus in getting better and I do all that I do for them.

I underwent chemotherapy, but I fell gravely ill, I contracted a life-threatening infection (Staphylococcus) and I was

sent to the hospital. The treatment involved 3 different antibiotics, administered 6 times a day. After being discharged, I started experiencing the same symptoms and was sent back to the hospital. I remained there for several months with the occasional visit home – for no more than a day – and I underwent an emergency Hartmann’s procedure as the tumour had grown to the size of a small watermelon and my bowel had perforated due to the intense chemotherapy. The surgery was a success however I contracted sepsis and was suffering from pneumonia. I was kept in isolation until the infections had cleared. I was transferred to a rehabilitation centre even though I was complaining of intense shooting pain from my lower back and down my right leg. My surgeon told me, “you’ll walk it off”. The rehab centre was unable to help, and I was left bed ridden for 3 months and I was using a walking frame for a further 3 months. I was later diagnosed – at Queens Hospital in London – with chronic and severe nerve damage and paraesthesia in both feet caused by “complications during surgery”. My mobility worsened over time and so had the pain I’ve endured. I’m currently using a mobility scooter to get around and to take back some independence.

The specialist care I have received from a team of professionals including:

- Dedicated GP
- Cancer Nurse
- Neurologist
- Physio
- Pain Clinician
- Chiropractor
- Orthotist
- Stoma Nurse
- Macmillan
- Family support workers
- Isabel Hospice
- Dietician
- Pain Management Team
- Pharmacists
- Home Nurse

I’ve also trialed non-medical therapies with little success. The list of medication prescribed, at this moment in time is:

- Oxycodone
- Paracetamol
- Gabapentin
- Promethazine
- Amitriptyline
- Mirtazapine
- Duloxetine
- Atorvastatin
- Famotidine
- Ramipril
- Omeprazole
- Folic acid

I’ve also undergone ketamine infusion therapy without success. All of which has had a severe negative impact on my mental health, I’ve been diagnosed with PTSD, depression and anxiety. Throughout all this my family have been a tremendous support to me, but they have also been affected significantly. I remain ever thankful of the NHS and I count myself lucky to have survived.

Below Mohammad discusses some of the blogs/articles he has written for Respond, and his experiences with the topics. You can find out more and read them in full by scanning the QR codes at the end.

Travelling with a stoma

This was by far the most enjoyable article I have written.

I was asked to provide tips for those planning to travel with a stoma on holiday, whether it's in the UK or overseas. I used the example of when I was invited as a guest on the wonderful, witty, and by far my favourite podcast 'Beyond the Pouch' in Cardiff Bay, Wales. I chose to stay in a hotel the night before and I packed a small suitcase with all my clothes and a small holdall with only stoma products. On the day of the recording, I left the suitcase with the hotel reception having made enquires before booking which saved me from dragging the suitcase around the Bay. It really is a beautiful place with lots to do, including a boat trip from Mermaid Quay to Cardiff Castle and plenty of places to eat, to eat. I spent most of my time sitting on on a balcony overlooking the calming sea.

I created a list of all necessary items I took with me:

- Stoma bags
- Barrier film wipes
- Disposable bags
- Hand wipes
- Dry wipes
- Scissors
- Disposal razor blade
- Key for disabled toilets

It's always best to order in advance and order more than what you think you may need. This will ensure your products arrived ahead of time - considering any unforeseen delays and to ensure you have plenty of products when you return home – for peace of mind.

The most important lesson I found is to **plan ahead and enjoy yourself.**

The importance of representation in the stoma and medical field

This was by far the most important and heartfelt article I have ever written. I wanted to highlight that despite advancements in science and medicine, there is a significant barrier to diversity and representation, particularly from ethnic minority groups, in critical medical research. Take the Covid-19 pandemic as an example; Public Health England stated that ethnic minority groups were at a greater risk of dying from coronavirus - up to 50% compared to white ethnicity. And a study by Crohn's and Colitis UK states the data for "South Asian people with IBD in the UK is extremely limited and rather out of date", which highlights the need for more inclusive and diverse research. However the issues are a lot more complex and not so one sided; take for example a study carried out by British Journal of Nursing who found - when it investigated the inequalities in cancer screening - those from ethnic minority groups were less likely to engage with cancer screening programmes due to a lack of knowledge and awareness, the stigma associated with taking part in a screening and the possible outcome of the diagnoses is perceived as too daunting and overwhelming.



Diversity serves as a catalyst for innovation in any field, as it can impact disease prevalence, manifestation, and treatment responses. In medical research, excluding ethnic minorities from research studies limits our understanding of diseases and hinders the development of effective treatments. If we (as a country) are to lead the development of better products, support systems, and awareness campaigns the only way we overcome these challenges is together. It is unfortunate – to say the least - that we live in a world where one ethnic group has a significantly greater chance of survival than another, how is this equality? But until all groups step forward and participate in critical medical research this perpetuating cycle will only continue.

Conclusion

When I first came across Respond I struggled to find someone who I could relate with. I saw a number of well-dressed and well-mannered folk but no one that represented who I am. I had never of thought in my wildest dreams that they would want someone like me representing them let alone take up my offer of working for them. They've helped me gain confidence in writing and talking about my journey and my struggles. They've given me a platform to discuss topics that others tend to shy away from and – most importantly – they've introduced me to a wonderful community (their ambassadors) and I've found lifelong friends that inspire me.

The key take away from all of this is if you want change in this world you're going to have to stop waiting for it and create it yourself.



Thank you once again to Mohammad for sharing with us his experiences and opening up about important topics, we've all loved meeting and getting to know you. For more information and to read his blogs in full, scan the QR codes below, or head to respond.co.uk/blog where you will find them all and many others!



Embracing life's journey:
My battle with colon cancer



The importance of representation
in the stoma and medical field



Travelling with a stoma



My thoughts on Respond

E-engage with us!

Go online to access all the support you need from Colostomy UK

Visit our website: www.colostomy.org.uk for downloadable versions of all our advice booklets, information on stoma support groups and events, the latest Active Ostomates classes and practical guidance on living with a stoma.

And while you're there, subscribe to our free, monthly e-newsletter delivered straight to your inbox.

Or connect with fellow ostomates, their family and friends in our private Facebook Group. Search Colostomy UK Support Group Facebook and click to join.

Why not share your news on Instagram and Twitter:
@ColostomyUK

...and get involved!



My stoma journey

By Sally Graham

We spoke to Sally, Respond customer from Larne who has had her stoma since April 2023. Sally opens up about her stoma story and how she came to have her ostomy surgery after suffering with Ulcerative Colitis for many years.

Hi everyone my name is Sally Graham. I'm a 61 year old woman living in Larne, Northern Ireland, originally from Grimsby, Lincolnshire, who would like to share my story about having a stoma.

My operation was quite recent and is irreversible as I now only have my small bowel left. So this is for life.

My initial problems with my bowel started when I was a child; I used to struggle to go the toilet, only eventually going after doses of milk of magnesia were given to me. As an adult it subsided as I upped the fibre content in my diet. I left home at 27 and I had no problems thereafter until I was 29 when I had my first child. I suffered from constipation for the last couple of weeks of my pregnancy, which gave me hemorrhoids and meant I initially had bleeding from them. After my marriage broke down and I got divorced, I had the stress of that and being thrust into single parenthood, which I could not have predicted happening to me.



I moved from the family home into a flat above the local chippy in the village where my parents still lived. I continued to have problems with my bowel but it wasn't until I moved house again that I realised something was definitely not right with me. I was only 32 and I couldn't walk far before I was totally worn out. I went to the doctor who sent me for an investigation at Grimsby hospital where I had my first colonoscopy. It was scary, but it was made easier by the fact I knew two of the nurses in the department.

I was diagnosed as having Ulcerative Colitis and my long journey of living with this condition began.

Fast forward to 1998, I met my husband, William, we became friends for a year, fell in love and got married in 1999. I fell pregnant with my second daughter in February 2000 and had to be admitted to hospital with kidney stones in my left kidney while 7 months pregnant. I'd lost my mum that November, the month before my second daughter was born, then my dad died 7 months later, so neither of my parents were there to know that I went on to have a boy to complete my little family or to be there as grandparents to them. In a way I am pleased they didn't have to see me go through the things I have, it would have upset them.

We bought our first house together in Grimsby that December, and then I had my son in the January. I lost my baby weight really quickly but only knew how much I had lost when we came over to Larne for a visit, and I was shocked but pleased I could fit into a pair of jeans in Etam in size 12!

But the consequences of this weight loss was not good, I went right down to 9½ stone from 13½ in a year and kept being told by my husband to go to the doctor as I did not look well. In fact I wasn't, but I would not go insisting I was OK! I was running to the toilet nine times at night and the toilet was at the back of the house and we were at the front.

Eventually I consented to go to the doctor, and I ended up in hospital the week before Christmas, my husband being told unbeknown to me that I might not make



it beyond Christmas, leaving him shell-shocked that he might have to raise 3 children on his own! I thank God I came through this and did not die as predicted. I went on to move over here to Larne, have two kidney operations, flare-up with Colitis and generally being unwell in 2021 from working in the community during the pandemic, where I ended up in the Royal Victoria Hospital with my Colitis. I knew I couldn't leave it like I did that Christmas time.

I had to go in on my own as per COVID guidelines, and I felt very alone and scared, it felt like waiting at an abandoned railway station the seats were no better. I was not admitted until 2am and then wasn't allowed visitors either. It was also during this spell in hospital that I found out I had gallstones as well! In November 2022 I was called for a full colonoscopy as they hadn't been able to do one in 2021, only to find they couldn't do it because I had 2 strictures in my bowel preventing them checking it

Real life

all so I had to go for a CT scan. I went for a pre-assessment in the December and was told they were going to take my bowel away completely. I had initially been told it would be a partial removal, but they said because I'd had this condition for so long that they were concerned cancer could develop, I cried it was such a shock. I went in for elective surgery on 25th April 2023 and through the wonderful tutoring of the stoma nurses I now am able to live and cope with a stoma.

On coming out of hospital I was discharged to be under the stoma nurses in Antrim area hospital who suggested I sign up with Respond being local and more convenient for me. I can say I don't regret it for a minute, they phone me every month to see what I need and deliver to my house. Not having to worry about your supplies is a bonus and they're friendly and will answer any problems you might have or give advice.

Although my reason for having a stoma was not because of cancer like it is for some, they did find a tumour in my appendix which was cancerous and ready to break out, so I think I dodged a bullet there - no wonder my very serious surgeon had a smile on his face when I went in to see him and he told me the news. Not even the CT scanner had shown that. So what is life like with a stoma? Far better than life for 28 years with debilitating Ulcerative Colitis. The secret is don't be embarrassed by it, we are part of a large community that have had varied journeys to get to this point, for many it has saved their lives, it has certainly saved mine.

Thank you for reading,
Sally x



My husband and I in Dublin when I had to go to The Mater private hospital for a kidney operation in 2022

Eakin Healthcare is 50!



Some of our team in Comber with our founder, Tom Eakin.

Our parent company, Eakin Healthcare, recently celebrated its 50th anniversary with a series of gala events for its colleagues. These events provided a wonderful opportunity to catch up with colleagues across the business, reflecting on the significant milestone and business achievement, whilst recognising our continued devotion to patient care through our business-wide team of over 700 colleagues. We look forward to the next 50!

respond
making life better

Did you know?

Respond is just one part of Eakin Healthcare. Eakin Healthcare is made up of 3 therapeutic areas including ostomy, respiratory and surgical; we have colleagues across the world striving for excellence for their customers in their respective fields. Your Respond team in the UK consists of 117 employees throughout our customer care teams, warehouses, and office teams!



Meet Padraic

We're excited to introduce to our customers our recently appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Padraic Dempsey! Padraic joins the company as we start the next chapter of Eakin Healthcare, sharing his wealth of experience across the healthcare industry and his passion for people development, ensuring our customers' access to the best possible healthcare products and service.

Stoma team walk the 'long and winding road' with support from Respond



We recently had the opportunity to help support stoma practitioners from Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth, to put their best foot forward in a walk from London to Portsmouth in aid of a colleague suffering from Aphasia.

Starting at Trafalgar Square, and walking 72.5 miles in total, non-stop, to Queen Alexandra Hospital, a stoma team consisting of nurses, surgeons and care practitioners completed the walk, in aid of their friend and stoma nurse colleague, Joel Fraser, who suffers from Aphasia and was forced into retirement following a life-changing stroke. Respond Healthcare sponsored the walk and provided the team with all the necessary equipment and support transport needed to complete the journey.

Joel, who had worked at Queen Alexandra Hospital since 2008, suffered his life-changing stroke in September 2022, and now suffers from Broca's Aphasia as a result. The condition dramatically impacts a person's ability

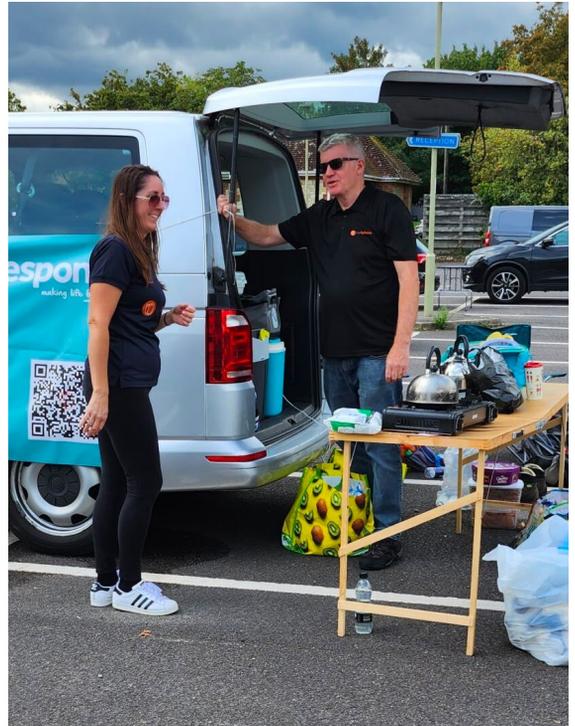
to speak, markedly diminishing the output of spontaneous speech, and resulting in a loss of normal grammatical structure, specifically the ability to link small words.

The walk undertaken by Joel's colleagues was to raise money for Say Aphasia, a charity that helps people with the condition adapt to their new way of life, and regain their independence and confidence. The charity has been a huge help and support structure to Joel, as he explains:

"The help and support I have received from Say Aphasia is invaluable and has been such a source of strength for me. It is helping me tackle the extremely challenging position I now find myself in, supporting me in taking crucial steps as I adjust to a life with Aphasia. It's a tough journey I find myself on but with the charity's help and with the love and support of my amazing friends and colleagues, I am ready for the challenge.

"To see what my friends have already done for me and what they put themselves through on the walk from London to Portsmouth is so inspiring and I can't thank them enough, they are amazing!"

The walk, in support of Joel was undertaken by his former colleagues at Queen Alexandra Hospital and



included, Andy Jones – Theatres HCSW, Mike Fitch – Stoma Nurse Specialist, Paul Sykes – Colorectal Surgeon, Emma Rawlinson – Colorectal Care Practitioner, and Mackayla Glover – Operating Department Practitioner. The walking team received great support from Janet Street – PA to the Stoma Care Team, David Street – Engineer, and Jen Ready – Stoma Care Nurse Specialist.

Commenting on Respond's support, Stuart Welland, our Chief Commercial Officer, said:

"To be able to contribute to this amazing team and support them



Janet, PA to Stoma Care Team and GI Nursing Team wrote: "We left QAH at 05:00 on Saturday and drove up to Putney, took the underground to Trafalgar Square where we parted company and the walkers began their trek. They walked continuously over two days and through the night just taking short breaks for food and drink. I still do not know how they kept going. Thank you once again for your support."

The team has already raised just over £10,000 for Say Aphasia, and we are delighted to have been able to support them for this worthwhile cause.

*Well done team
from us all at Respond!*

in their quest to raise money for Joel was extremely inspiring. Their efforts highlight what friendship really looks like and what a close-knit team they are. All of the staff at Respond Healthcare, many of which have known Joel for many years, were delighted to be able to play our part, and wish Joel the best on his recovery and journey in living with Aphasia."



Eakin Healthcare reinforces its commitment to Wales with opening a new distribution centre



We are excited to share with our readers that we recently opened a new distribution centre in Cardiff – further strengthening Eakin Healthcare’s commitment to Wales and taking our Cardiff employee base close to 250 people. Our new 81,905 sq. ft facility located on Brindley Road in Leckwith, Cardiff, will help us streamline regional distribution operations which serve all of the UK. Read more about this exciting update in our press release on the next page:



Eakin Healthcare has taken a 20-year lease on the new distribution centre which will act as a hub for all its products and those of other manufacturers, and represents a key part of its plans to strengthen its operations in Wales, with capacity to grow further still in the coming years. It follows £500k investment in its Llanishen office on solar panels to ensure its manufacturing processes are completely delivered via sustainable, green energy in line with Cardiff Council's One Planet strategy.

Commenting on the new distribution centre, Padraic Dempsey, Chief Executive Officer of Eakin Healthcare said:

"We are proud of our history in Wales and this move allows us to strengthen our operations, recruit new staff, and reinforces our commitment to the region. We invest a great deal in R&D to ensure we create the best products for our customers, so it is logical to invest in our distribution services, guaranteeing those products reach every person who relies on them to live their lives on a daily basis.

We were delighted to officially open our distribution centre with a special guest, seven-year-old Jake Allen, one of Wales' and Respond Healthcare's younger ostomates, who epitomises why we do what we do and is an absolute joy to be around. He has been through so much, but always has a smile on his face. To know we are helping people like Jake makes everything worthwhile."

Belong activities

It's been a busy fundraising time for our social committee, Belong! With the help of our generous colleagues across the UK, we managed to raise money for some wonderful charities. Take a read of our activities below:



Macmillan coffee morning

At the end of September we took part in Macmillan's coffee morning where staff brought in some lovely treats to share, with all donations going towards Macmillan's vital work. With a generous donation from the Eakin Foundation, we managed to raise a whopping **£3,800!** Our care teams in Respond raised **£1,300** alone! Well done teams.

Perth charity raffle

Our wonderful team in Perth also held their own charity coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support and Andy's Man Club. Included in the prizes were 2 paintings by a Respond customer; 1 of a sunset in Santorini, and 1 of Suilven Pillar Mountain, Wester Ross; a hand made tartan quilt, cushion rests for a tablets, makeup bags and much more. In total the team raised an amazing **£770** for the charities! Well done team Perth, and thank you to everyone who donated prizes.



National Customer Service Week

In October we celebrated National Customer Service Week with our Respond team across the UK, celebrating our wonderful care teams and the service they provide for our customers. We arranged some fun activities and competitions, showcasing talents, recognising our colleagues, challenging minds — and most importantly, having a whole lot of fun! Take a look below of some of our activities:

We started the week with having our Chief Commercial Officer, Stuart Welland, joining the care team in Larne for the day! We asked Stuart a few questions about how he found the day, here's what he said...

Why did you agree to experience being a customer service advisor for the day?

This is one of the most important parts of our business and I wanted to understand why we get such high ratings for our service, now I know why.

What did you enjoy the most?

It is a busy office, but open and welcoming. Hearing and seeing the open friendly atmosphere. Getting to see the different stages of the ordering – the end-to-end process.

What did you find most difficult?

Apart from making the tea..... multitasking – blocking out the background noise.

What surprised you about the role?

The number of steps to service an order from start to finish.



During National Customer Service week we also celebrated our 8th birthday with lots of delicious cake! Here are our sites celebrating:



Larne



Ferndown



Cardiff



Manchester



Peterborough

Company news



Nottingham



Nottingham Warehouse



London, with our Area Manager, Bobby



Perth, with our Commercial Director, Nick

Padraic Dempsey, our Chief Executive Officer, also joined our Larne site to experience being a customer service advisor for a day! The team were also delighted to have him with them and show him the ins and outs of the daily work of our customer service team.

We also asked Padraic about his experience, and here's what he had to say...

Why did you agree to experience being a customer service advisor for the day?

It's a critical part of our organisation. Respond Customer Services have first-hand experience with the customers. Getting the chance to work alongside the people who interact with our users on a daily basis.

What did you enjoy the most?

The sense of fun within the team, and everyone's enthusiasm for making sure we provide an exceptional service.



What did you find most difficult?

The challenges of ensuring we had the adequate stock to meet the user's needs.

What surprised you about the role?

The level of detail required, and the amount of information to gather from different sources to enable us to supply all the necessary services - GPs, to suppliers, to operations. It was great to see the level of professionalism and focus and to see all of our users are cared for to the best of our ability. The level of care the advisors have to ensure our users get the best quality service in a timely manner.

Julie Comsa, Head of Customer Engagement, also said:

"What a brilliant week for our Customer Service teams, it really was fantastic to see so much engagement and how much fun everyone had. Thank you to everyone who made this week possible and to each and every one of our brilliant Advisors who really do go above and beyond every day. You are amazing!"

What a brilliant #NationalCustomerServiceWeek2023 it was! We would like to give a big shout out to our care teams who provide exceptional service every day. Thank you for all that you do.

Until next year!



Whether you're facing surgery to create a urinary diversion, recovering after your operation or facing challenges further along on your journey, it's so important that you get the information and support that's right for you, helping you **live life with confidence.**

Friendly and inclusive, we are the **national charity for people with a urostomy or other type of urinary diversion.** We are here for your family and carers, too.

How we help:

- One-to-one support from our trained volunteers*
- Helpline
- Advocacy
- Comprehensive website, welcoming Facebook community, plus regular newsletter and magazine

*Wherever possible, your support volunteer will be someone who has the same type of urinary diversion that you need or already have.



We've been trusted to do what we do for **more than 50 years**, so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

 01386 430140

 www.urostomyassociation.org.uk

Eakin Healthcare establishes Ostomy Centre of Excellence with £19m investment in R&D



Pictured (L-R) are Dr. Martin Crockard, Director of Development, Eakin Healthcare; Dr. Vicky Kell, Director of Innovation, Research and Development, Invest Northern Ireland; Padraic Dempsey, CEO, Eakin Healthcare; Mary McAllister, Finance Director Group Accounting, Eakin Healthcare.

Eakin Healthcare has announced an investment of £19 million in Research and Development (R&D) to establish an Ostomy Centre of Excellence at its International Headquarters in Comber, Co. Down.

Celebrating 50 years, Eakin Healthcare is a family-owned business which manufactures and supplies medical devices for ostomy, wound, respiratory and surgical needs.

Making the announcement, Padraic Dempsey, CEO of Eakin Healthcare, said: "The patient has always been at the heart of everything we do. As

we have an ageing population with more chronic conditions, our purpose continues to be ensuring that we help people to live as normal a life as possible.

Our new Centre of Excellence will support us to achieve this by developing life enhancing products which will support people who have had stoma surgery globally to lead a life with confidence and dignity for many years to come. We are extremely grateful to Invest NI for its partnership and support."

Eakin Healthcare's products are available in over 60 countries, and it

has employees spanning across nine countries including France, Germany, the Netherlands and Japan.

Dr. Martin Crockard, Director of Development at Eakin Healthcare, said: "An important aspect of the Ostomy Centre of Excellence is collaboration with our excellent local Universities and further education colleges, the regional City Deal initiatives and Northern Ireland's renowned small to medium businesses, particularly in engineering and support services. These links will increase Eakin's knowledge base, driving innovation and agility to provide competitive advantage while, crucially, supporting Eakin's desire to create products that meet the complex needs of our customers across the world."

Supported by Invest Northern Ireland, the investment in R&D will enable Eakin Healthcare to add pilot lines including skin friendly medical adhesives and the creation of the next generation of ostomy pouches. Congratulating the company, Dr Vicky Kell, Director of Innovation, Research and Development at Invest Northern Ireland, said: "Today's announcement secures the future of Eakin as a homegrown pioneer in Ostomy healthcare, while

simultaneously enhancing Northern Ireland's reputation as a global centre of innovation in engineering and healthcare. It's also great to see this investment supporting the creation of up to 16 new roles within the company's R&D, Operation and Commercial teams at its Comber facility.

The economic benefits of R&D within key growth sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing and Life and Health Sciences are recognised within the Department for the Economy's 10x Vision. As we seek to grow our local economy, investments such as this are vital."

Invest NI's R&D support is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Northern Ireland (2014–2020) Programme.

Main

Muffin-topped winter beef stew

Prep time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 2 hrs & 30 mins cooling

Serves: 2

Ingredients for stew:

- 500g braising steak, cut into bite-sized chunks
- 2 tbsp plain flour, seasoned with pepper and a little salt
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 450g carrot, cut into chunks
- 2 large parsnips, cut into chunks
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tbsp sundried or regular tomato paste
- 300ml red wine or extra stock
- 450ml vegetable stock

Ingredients for topping:

- 225g plain flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 140g cheddar, coarsely grated
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 150ml milk



Recipe card

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/muffin-topped-winter-beef-stew>

Method:



STEP 1

Heat oven to 150C/fan 130C/gas 2. Toss the beef in seasoned flour. Heat the oil in a large flameproof casserole. Fry the beef over a high heat until browned all over – it's easiest to do this in batches. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

STEP 2

Add 2 tbsp water and the onion to the pan, stir well over a medium heat, scraping up the crusty bits from the bottom of the pan. Lower the heat and fry gently for 10 mins, stirring occasionally until the onions have softened.

STEP 3

Tip in the carrots, parsnips and bay leaf, then fry for 2 mins more. Return the beef to the pan, stir in the tomato paste, wine if using, and stock, then bring to the boil. Cover and cook in the oven for 1¾-2 hrs until the meat is tender. Can be made up to 2 days ahead or frozen for up to 1 month. Defrost thoroughly in the fridge before topping and baking. Take out of the oven and increase the temperature to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5.

STEP 4

To make the topping, sieve the flour and baking powder into a bowl and add half the cheese. Mix olive oil and milk, then stir into the flour to make a soft, slightly sticky dough. Add more milk, if necessary. Spoon the dough over the meat and vegetables, sprinkle with the remaining cheese and bake for about 15 mins until golden, risen and cooked through.

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Let **REFRESH** simplify your daily stoma care routine.



To find out if this is 'The One' for you... scan the **QR code** with your smart phone or visit respond.co.uk/refresh or call **0800 220 300 | 0800 028 6848 N.Ireland**

REMOVE. PROTECT. REFRESH.



Please note:

If you are unsure whether a product containing a barrier film is right for you, please speak with your Stoma Care Nurse. For Scottish requests, we will need to seek Stoma Care Nurses approval first.

Ostomy output and leaks

BIG PROBLEM? EVERYDAY SOLUTION!

If you have an ileostomy, you will be used to a looser stoma output, whereas with a colostomy you can sometimes pass a looser output, and with a urostomy a higher volume of output, due to factors such as diet, medications, and fluid intake. However, it is important to monitor any episodes of increased output, whatever your stoma type.

A looser output may mean you need to empty or change your bag more often, but it is also more likely to lead to leaks if your stoma care routine isn't fully secure. If you are experiencing leaks due to an increased volume of output (or for any other reason), you do not have to live with it. There are many solutions available to you, some help to thicken your output and others help make your stoma care routine more secure. Please remember to discuss any concerns you have with your stoma care nurse, who may ask you to measure the volume of your output for monitoring.

Thickening your output

Diet can be a big factor in why your output has changed, so assessing what has caused looser than usual output could be a first step. Foods such as fresh fruits, cereals, and raw vegetables can lead to increased output for those with an ileostomy or colostomy. Drinking alcoholic drinks and eating spicy foods can also increase the volume of output.

Eating foods like bananas, jellybeans, marshmallows, and natural yogurts (where tolerated) can help thicken your output naturally. More information regarding the effects of foods on your stoma can be found in our Nutrition Guides, available to download online, but please remember that these are a guide only and you may wish to speak to your stoma care nurse who can direct to a dietitian if you have further questions or concerns.

You may also wish to use a solidifying agent such as ABSORB, which are little sachets that can

be added to the inside of your bag to absorb output and solidify it, to make it thicker. Suitable for colostomy and ileostomy stoma bags, ABSORB is available on prescription and to purchase.

Secure stoma care routine

If output is getting under your baseplate you may want to consider adding a seal to your routine. Frequent leaks can damage the skin around your stoma making it sore and irritated which can be both painful and difficult to manage.

Using a seal with high absorption properties such as eakin **Cohesive**[®] seals, or eakin **freeseal**[®], can help protect you by stopping output from reaching your skin around your stoma. This extra layer of protection that seals can provide can also help provide a flat surface for your bag to adhere to the skin, creating a secure seal, giving you confidence in your stoma care products even with loose output.



There's an
eakin[®] seal for
every ostomate

Scan the QR code above or visit respond.co.uk/eakin-seals to find out more and to sample eakin[®] seals today!

How does broken skin prevent my stoma bag from sticking?

An ideal skin surface for your stoma bag to stick well is one that is clean and dry, and free from any greases or creams. However, we know that if you have experienced skin damage or soreness due to your output getting onto the skin surrounding your stoma, that a completely dry skin surface may not be possible.

Sore or broken skin can also be caused by the removal of stoma bags, or other appliances, that pull at your skin surrounding your stoma, which is known as 'skin stripping', or from skin conditions such as psoriasis or eczema.

Please be assured that although this can be uncomfortable and sore, that you are not alone, that many other ostomates also deal with sore skin from time to time.

When the skin becomes sore and broken it can make the adhesion of the stoma bag difficult due to the wet and weepy skin, which can cause your stoma bag to leak, causing even further skin damage.

Using an ostomy seal like eakin® seals can help to prevent leaks by absorbing output and provide an even and dry skin surface for your stoma bag to adhere to.

If you are experiencing leaks and sore skin, we recommend you speak to your stoma care nurse as soon as possible to prevent further damage and to ensure the products you are using are still suitable. They may recommend the use of a skin treatment or powder to help create a dry surface, or even the use of a seal to help with stoma bag adhesion. Your stoma care nurse can assess your skin and advise on the best course of action.



There's an eakin® seal for every ostomate

Scan the QR code above or visit respond.co.uk/eakin-seals to find out more and to sample eakin® seals today!



Flush and retracted stomas, and leaks

No two stomas are the same and whereas some protrude out from the body by 10mm or more, others can be much closer to skin level, and some even below skin level. These are called flush or retracted stomas and they can happen for a few reasons, such as during surgery due to amount of bowel available, or post-surgery due to weight gain or from developing a hernia.

Whatever the reason for you having a flush stoma, it is important that you have the right stoma bag and other products, if necessary, to help with your stoma protrusion and to prevent leaks.

If you're currently using a flat pouch, you may need to speak to your stoma care nurse to discuss potentially trying a convex stoma bag. Convex stoma bags are designed to provide gentle pressure on your skin to help your stoma protrude further into the stoma bag and create a better seal between the bag and your skin.

Sometimes, even when using a convex bag, you may still experience leaks under the baseplate, so the addition of a seal may be a great solution for you.

However, with a flush stoma it is important to consider the thickness of the seal. The convex bag is there to help with stoma protrusion into the bag and therefore considering a thin yet absorbent seal for added protection is important. The seal will help absorb any output around the base of the stoma, and help prevent leaks from occurring, protecting peristomal skin.

There's an eakin® seal for every ostomate

If you are using a convex drainable stoma bag yet still finding moisture is being trapped under your bag, then try an **eakin® freeseal**. These seals are super thin which mean they can mould around your stoma yet not impact the convexity of your stoma bag. A thin layer of extra protection.

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HEALTHCARE

Why it's important to make time for self-care with an ostomy

by Amy

Self-care is important for our wellbeing. Amy (@ibdwarriorprincess) shares with us insight into her self-care with a chronic illness and ostomy, and potential barriers people may experience and how it doesn't always feel attainable.



Self-care, in general, is something that we all need. It is vital for our well-being and if we don't give ourselves the time to rest and recuperate, then we pay for it. Especially with chronic illness and when it comes to ostomy life. In this blog post, I am going to explain what self-care is, explore some of the ways in which self-care can be practiced and also, explain some of the barriers to self-care. See this blog post as your cue too... If you haven't set any time aside recently for yourself, this is your reminder! Put some time aside now!

What is self-care?

Self-care means different things to different people, but generally, it is looking after yourself so that you can go about your daily life without experiencing negative repercussions with your health. Of course, some of these things such as being ill are outside our control, but there are things we can do to bring ourselves comfort and get the rest that our bodies need.

Examples of self-care

You may see self-care as something that's split into different types of health that you need to look after. Examples include things to look after your physical, mental, emotional, spiritual well-being.

Physical self-care

Examples of looking after your physical health include:

- A healthy sleep routine
- Exercise
- Eating healthily
- Choosing to go to the gym
- Spending time outdoors

Mental and emotional self-care

- Restricting time on social media and/or taking a digital detox. Disconnecting to reconnect!
- Saying "no" to things that cause unnecessary stress
- Seeing a friend for coffee
- Reading a book
- Meditating
- Writing your thoughts down
- Listening to music



Spiritual self-care

- Meditating
- Keeping a gratitude journal
- Watching or listening to inspirational talks
- Spending time in nature
- Practicing yoga
- Clearing your space

Self-care with chronic illness and an ostomy

Some of the above things may not feel attainable with chronic illness and/or an ostomy. For me, sometimes I feel that what can seem as the smallest acts of self-care can make the biggest difference. It's not always cliché bubble baths, candles and doing yoga. Sometimes, it's choosing to eat instead of not. It's choosing to drink decaffeinated tea and not caffeinated. It's reminding yourself that following old, negative behaviours won't get you where you want to be, even if they feel good at the time. It's not setting an alarm or it's even choosing to brush your teeth when it feels like a humongous task.



Barriers to self-care

As I mentioned above, sometimes, self-care just doesn't feel attainable. But, actually, the times you feel you haven't got the energy for self-care is when you need it most. It sometimes feels impossible to even get out of bed. What are the things that may provide barriers to self care? Examples include:

- **Lack of time** – For some, self-care may not be a priority in their schedules. Time management may be an issue or too many responsibilities. Self-care doesn't need to be huge. Even choosing to practice deep breaths on a 5-minute break can make a big difference.
- **Feeling guilty or non-deserving** – People with low self-esteem may feel like they are non-deserving of making themselves a priority. This is a reminder that everyone deserves self-care time and self-care actually enables you to take better care of others. Invest in yourself where you can.

- **Worry of financial burden** – Self-care is often wrongly seen as something expensive such as going on a fancy spa break or signing up to a gym. Self-care is best when it's free or very low cost. Have a spa experience at home with a lovely bubble bath and candles and a hot drink such as peppermint tea. Having a lie-in is always free, as are cuddles with your loved ones and furry ones!
- **Poor surrounding self-care beliefs** – Some people around you may not see the needs for self-care and may even try to belittle you for expressing a need to take time for yourself. Self-care isn't selfish. Self-care is necessary and showing yourself compassion, regardless of what others say, is super important. Just because someone else doesn't choose to prioritise themselves, doesn't mean you shouldn't.

Respond's useful advice and support

Respond have a fantastic 'Lifestyle' section on their website, full of useful advice and information to help you live life with an ostomy. They also have an amazing 'Blog' section which houses lots of useful stories from other ostomates that may help!

Useful blog posts on Respond's website include:



Taking time for you
by Maryrose



Nurturing your mental health and embracing life as an ostomate
by Mohammad



Remaining positive in difficult times
by Keith

Scan the QR codes above to read, or head to respond.co.uk/blog to read all our blogs!

One last reminder

Self-care isn't always easy. However, it is vital. It is important. It is transformative in some cases. Listening to your body is so important and when you don't, you learn, often the hard way! Remember that taking time for yourself is key. Taking time out is needed and you often need to disconnect in order to reconnect with yourself and the world around you.

Thank you for reading,
Amy x

Latest blogs...

Our digital team has been busy collaborating with our amazing Brand Ambassadors once again, to bring you insightful blogs covering a wide range of topics over on our blog section of the website. We've picked a few for you to read in this issue. Take a look...

Understanding and managing pancaking

by Mohammad

Have you experienced pancaking? Mohammad (@colon_cancer_and_me) explores what pancaking is, the potential causes, and most importantly – his top tips on how to avoid and manage it effectively!

Scan the QR code to the right or visit www.respond.co.uk/2023/10/06/understanding-and-managing-pancaking-by-mohammad/ to read.



Stoma leaks and close calls

by Amy

In this blog, Amy (@ibdwarriorprincess), shares the challenges she has faced dealing with bag leaks and close calls, the reasons for leakage and how to prevent them. Amy also opens up about her personal leakage experiences and how it affects her mentally.

Scan the QR code to the left or visit www.respond.co.uk/2023/08/15/stoma-leaks-blockages-and-close-calls-by-amy/ to read.

Online

Latest
blogs...

Respond: The Team That Delivers

by Keith

"Respond's delivery service has definitely taken away the worry and inconvenience that I experienced when I was getting my supplies via my GP surgery/pharmacy..." Find out more why Keith (@keiththom2014) chose Respond as his prescription dispensing service

Scan the QR code to the left with your smartphone or visit www.respond.co.uk/2023/10/05/respond-the-team-that-delivers-by-keith/ to read.



We hope you've enjoyed reading our Brand Ambassadors' blogs. More are available to read on our websites respond.co.uk/blog and pelicanhealthcare.co.uk/ostomate-blog.

Do you have a question for one of our ambassadors or would you like to tell us about your story or experience? If so, please send an email to

marketing@respond.co.uk

and a member of our fantastic digital team will contact you!



Dessert

Plum crumble

Prep time: 15 mins
Cook: 45 mins
Serves: 6

Top Tip

Try using two types of sugar and ground almonds for the perfect crunchy crumble topping, enjoyed with custard or cinnamon ice cream!

Ingredients:

- 800g ripe cooking plums, such as Victoria or dessert plums, halved and stoned
- 50g light brown sugar
- finely grated zest 1 orange
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp plain flour

Ingredients for crumble:

- 250g plain flour
- 150g butter
- 80g caster sugar
- 80g demerara sugar
- 50g ground almonds



Recipe card

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/plum-crumble>

Method:



STEP 1

Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Put the plums into the base of a shallow gratin dish about 28cm long. Mix together the sugar, orange zest, cinnamon and flour and sprinkle over the plums. Trickle over 2 tbsp water.

STEP 2

Put all the crumble ingredients into a food processor, and using the pulse button, whizz until the mixture just starts to clump together. Take care not to over process at this stage. Alternatively, rub the butter into the flour using your hands and then stir in the other ingredients.

STEP 3

Scatter the crumble over the plums and bake in the oven for 30–40 mins until golden brown. Leave for about 15 mins before serving with custard or cream.

Beyond the Pouch

with Rachel & Louise

Brought to you by Pelican, Respond and Eakin Healthcare, Beyond the Pouch is a podcast that follows hosts, Rachel & Louise, as they dive into the world of ostomy through open and honest conversations, including the lives of many inspirational ostomates, so you can get to know them – Beyond the Pouch.

Watch & listen now



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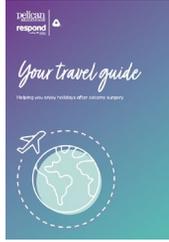
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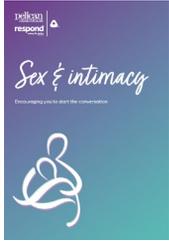
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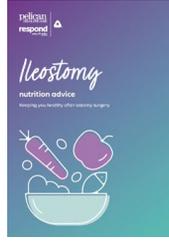
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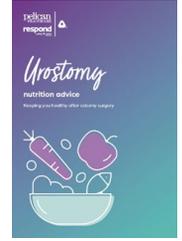
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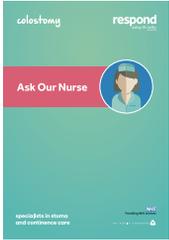
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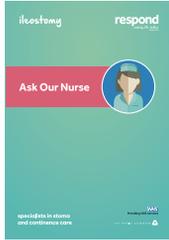
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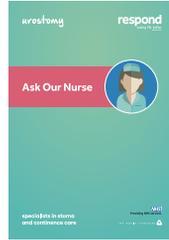
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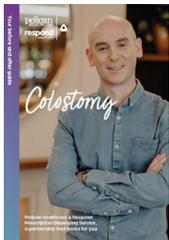


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Colostomy UK

100 Berkshire Place,
Winnersh,
Wokingham
RG41 5RD

T: +44 (0)118 939 1537
Helpline 0800 328 4257
E: info@colostomyuk.org
colostomyuk.org

Ileostomy Association

Danehurst Court
35 - 37 West Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BE

Freephone: 0800 018 4724
T: 01702 549859
E: info@iasupport.org
www.iasupport.org

Urostomy Association

2 Tyne Place
Mickleton
Chipping Campden
Gloucestershire
GL55 6UG

T: 01386 430 140
E: info@urostomyassociation.org.uk
www.urostomyassociation.org.uk

Crohns and Colitis UK

1 Bishops Square (Helios Court)
Hatfield Business Park
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL10 9NE

T: 0300 222 5700
www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer

87-90 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7UQ

Freephone: 0808 808 00 00
www.macmillan.org.uk

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Mind

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London
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E info@mind.org.uk
Text: 86463
www.mind.org.uk

contact us

0800 220 300
0800 028 6848 (Northern Ireland)



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Peterborough

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Forder Way
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Peterborough
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