

# Life couldn't be sweeter

Peter Tarry

**18 Sweet Tree Home Care Services**  
Domiciliary care

☀️ ♀️ 🏠 +

TOP RANKS	
Wellbeing	7th
Personal growth	8th
Leadership	14th

---

Male/female ratio	13:87
Average age	36
Graduate vacancies	26%
Staff turnover	2%

**JOAN GRADY HAS** been caring for retired teacher Yvonne Lyons at her north London home for 2½ years. Grady comes in twice a week and helps out with the little things that make all the difference, from making a cup of tea to doing the shopping and taking her to the hairdresser. The visits last two hours on a Wednesday and four on a Friday, long enough for the pair to form a meaningful bond and create job satisfaction for Grady.

Barry Sweetbaum, co-founder and managing director of SweetTree Home Care Services, Grady's employer, says setting visit times to a minimum of two hours — compared to the half-hour slots often provided by other care operators — has been the business's greatest asset. "The care users like it and the care workers feel like they are doing a good job," he says.

The staff back up his theory and just nine organisations did better than the 76% positive score they gave SweetTree for its realistic deadlines. They also say the company offers a great service to its clients (89%, 15th), have all the support they need to provide that service (78%, ninth) and that what is expected of them in their work is made completely clear (82%, 11th).

Set up in 2002 by former NHS manager Sweetbaum and nurse Nicki Bones, who had worked together previously, SweetTree has extended its original remit of offering domiciliary care for the elderly in northwest London to include catering for clients with dementia, learning disabilities, brain injuries and neurological conditions within the M25.

"We are growing and are in the process of setting up an office in Bristol," says Sweetbaum. "But the fundamental thing is to retain the culture. We want to be around people we like and

that our clients will like, so personality is absolutely crucial."

Retired nurse Grady has up to five clients who she goes to regularly, amounting to 35 hours' work a week. Though she works by herself in people's homes, she never feels out on a limb, as she explains: "We do tend to the clients by ourselves but if there's any concerns we just ring the office, there's always somebody there with an answer."

The company is keen to promote from within where possible. Psychology graduate Sarah Taie, care supervisor for the learning disabilities team, started as a care worker but says the close weekly contact she kept with her manager helped bring about her promotion. "In the short time that I've been here I've seen [career] growth. They're so person-centred. It's almost like a family," says Taie. She says most people at head office have been support workers, and this helps create passion for the services provided.

SweetTree gets the top score in the survey for staff finding the training in their job of great benefit (82%) and just two organisations did better for giving employees experience that will be valuable for their futures (84%).

Director of operations and co-founder Bones, who shares an office with her husband Phil, the company's handyman, says SweetTree is flexible about the care packages it sells to clients (just under half of whom are private, with the lion's share funded by public bodies). "We introduce the carers first and the client can change if they want, though it doesn't happen often. If someone no longer needs us, that's true success," says Bones.

[sweettree.co.uk](http://sweettree.co.uk)

## Managers who listen

	% score for managers listening as well as telling	Page
1 UKRD Group	87.1	14
2 SweetTree Home Care Services	79.7	22
3 Kenneth Green Associates	78.7	15
4 Metaswitch	77.8	18
5 Admiral Group	75.8	18
6 One Vision Housing	73.6	16
7= Lexington Catering	73.2	19
7= Politec	73.2	16
9 Lindum Group	72.5	24
11= Pertemps People Development Group	72.3	16
10= Office Angels	72.3	19



Good fit: SweetTree carer Joan Grady helps Yvonne Lyons with a jigsaw puzzle