

OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BE CARING - OCTOBER 2020 - LEEDS SERVICE





LEEDS OVERVIEW

Be Caring have been delivering care in Leeds for 8 years. We have over 140 colleagues providing more than 3,600 weekly hours of care and support every week to over 290 people in Chapeltown, Chapel Allerton, Meanwood, Harewood, Moortown, Seacroft, Roundhay, Harehills, Belle Isle, Middleton. Beeston. Holbeck, Oulton, Rothwell, Gildersome, Morley, Outwood, Ardsley and Robin Hood.

As an employee-owned social enterprise; our culture and values are at the heart of everything we do. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been making sure our colleagues and Service users are safe.

Throughout the pandemic, our service has really pulled together, working as a strong, resilient team to support each other, and the people we provide care for. Some of our key strengths have been:

- ↳ **Growth, recruitment and retention**, moving to a digital process and increasing the number of Care Workers on block contracts, reducing our turnover and responding to the needs of those we support.
- ↳ **Partnerships and joint working** with our commissioners, Social Workers and the wider system through Local Care Partnerships.

↳ **Keeping our local communities safe**, donating 26,000 face masks to local VCS groups across Leeds. We worked with local community organisations, matching volunteers to support to those who were shielding, isolated or lonely.

↳ **Pursuing development and innovation**, continuing with the development and implementation of our Community Teams homecare model, using our 7 Ways to Being Well approach to care planning and support.

“Everyone just came together and understood and supported one another. It’s new times for all of us none of us knew what to expect but it was just safe ”

CHLOE MEAD - CARE WORKER



**SARAH
KEENAN**

SERVICE MANAGER

“I moved into the Service Manager role at Be Caring Leeds around February 2020. It wasn’t long after that the world certainly took a very unique turn and we were faced with quite a scary and daunting situation, delivering care within a global pandemic.

Like everyone, I was concerned about my own safety as well as that of my family, my colleagues (whether that be in the office or out in the field), their families and our vulnerable service users. I don’t think I could have ever envisaged the amazing response from our army of Care Workers and colleagues who have worked so hard to protect themselves and those they have cared for. I am so proud of what they have all achieved and how we have all pulled together to ensure that those at greatest risk have been protected.”

OUR COMMISSIONERS THANK YOU

OUR RESPONSE TO
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

LEEDS SERVICE



We'd like to take this opportunity to say **thank you** - to our commissioners - for your support in such challenging times.

We are truly grateful for the additional support you have given us; facilitating information sharing, offering guidance, establishing virtual provider meetings, distributing PPE and implementing covid-19 measures to ease the financial pressures.

Your support over the last few months has been invaluable. More importantly, the relationships and collaborative working has created a solid foundation for us to continue working in partnership to meet our shared goals of providing outstanding care in the community and transforming home care.





OUR CULTURE: GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND



BE PROUD: CASE STUDY

JESSICA CARE WORKER

Jessica has been one of our amazing care workers for 4 years now. She's a ray of sunshine – happy, smiley and kind. She's known for how incredibly supportive she is, particularly to new colleagues who need a little extra guidance.

During the early phase of Covid-19 Jessica supported one of her colleagues who was self-isolating, giving her lots of reassurance and making her feel better by letting her know work was going well. She went above and beyond for service users throughout the pandemic, working extra days to go shopping for them and making sure they didn't feel alone.

One colleague said: "Jessica is so happy and such a kind person. The positive energy she brings each day to every call is inspiring. I live over the road from her and when I have been self-isolating I've seen her go to her daily calls with a big smile on her face, singing, bringing lots of joy, nothing holding her back."

As an employee owned business, we empower colleagues to make a difference in the lives of our service users and be part of their communities – to live and breathe our values as well as achieving our mission **"To be care-giving day-makers, hope-builders, smile-givers, life-changers, community-warriors with the will to make a difference"**

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, one of our largest strengths in Leeds has been our hardworking, passionate team. There have been some truly incredible examples of Care Workers going above and beyond for the people we support, and their fellow colleagues:

- ↘ **Encouraging a more varied and healthy diet** to improve service users' physical health and wellbeing.
- ↘ Once restrictions had eased, **helping service users prepare their home for visitors**, so people could celebrate Father's Day and birthdays.

- ↘ **Shopping for essentials such as groceries, medications and pet food** - One Care Worker **paid for a service user's shopping** due to a delay with his income.
- ↘ **Deep cleaning service users' homes** - one Care Worker did this whilst on shift and in their own time.
- ↘ **Covering shifts at short notice**, to help out colleagues who needed to self-isolate or were struggling with childcare.
- ↘ **Cutting service users' hair and doing manicures** in lockdown, reducing feelings of isolation, and improving their mental wellbeing.
- ↘ **Taking bedding and laundry home to wash** when a service user's washing machine was out of order.

"During this crisis some of our service users have felt more isolated because their family and friends can't visit, I have tried to go a little earlier or stay a bit longer just to talk to them and make them feel a bit better"

CATHERINE - CARE WORKER

"During Covid-19 I've cleaned houses when cleaners could no longer work, I've been to shops to get supplies when families are unable, I've reassured customers who were scared and upset, I've stayed that little extra because they were lonely and hated being on their own. It's the little things that make a difference."

RACHEL - CARE WORKER



KEY FINDINGS IN LEEDS



On the 4th July 2020, we sent out a company-wide survey about Covid-19. Of 325 responses, 63 colleagues from Leeds completed the survey. The headlines from this survey are:

KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

100%

of colleagues know and understand the additional infection control and social distancing measures that are in place **(1% more than the company average)**.

100%

of colleagues know what level of PPE is required to their work. **(3% more than the company average)**.

90%

of colleagues had the right amount and correct PPE to do their role **(3% more than the company average)**.

SUPPORT

95%

of colleagues have felt supported by their immediate manager. **(6% more than the company average)**.

94%

of colleagues who joined during Covid* think the induction and training provided was good enough for them to perform their role. **(6% more than the company average)** *17 respondents.

100%

of colleagues has the support they wanted while self-isolating. **(8% more than the company average)** *15 respondents.

COMMUNICATION

97%

of colleagues agree the guidance and communications have been frequent and clear. **(3% more than the company average)**.

95%

of colleagues think that communications were helpful and honest. **(3% more than the company average)**.

VALUES & CULTURE

100%

of colleagues believe their role has made a difference to the people they support. **(2% more than the company average)**.

97%

of colleagues said they were able to deliver the care they aspire to. **(1% more than the company average)**.

92%

of colleagues believe their work has been valued **(3% more than the company average)**.



LEADERSHIP

As a senior leadership team, we wanted to cultivate a safe environment, in which all our leaders and office teams were able to share their challenges and promote any learning and scaling of best practice. We increased and established new communications at all levels of the organisation, focusing on PPE guidance, Covid testing, social distancing, infection control measures and personal wellbeing.

We rapidly implemented new processes and ways of working, this included:

- ↘ **Promoting colleague safety in the face of Covid-19** and ensuring they have enhanced PPE, support, and safety guidance.
- ↘ **Frequent communications and clear guidance** so Care Workers understood the changing guidance around PPE, infection prevention and control, and social distancing measures
- ↘ **Ensuring employees' wellbeing** through more frequent contact with their teams and promoting access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- ↘ **Keeping the individuals and families we support safe**, many of whom are vulnerable.

- ↘ **Recruiting and retaining our Care workforce** to meet the needs of those we support and simultaneously changing the interview and induction process to be virtual, wherever possible.
- ↘ **Implementing new and scaling existing technologies** to enable home-working and putting office social distancing measures in place.
- ↘ Regular **check-in calls with colleagues who were isolating or furloughed**, ensuring people had the support they needed.

“Just to say thank you very much for keeping a consistent service over this difficult time with Care Workers having to isolate and everything, there has never been a missed visit which is excellent. Thank you.”

**DAUGHTER
OF A LEEDS SERVICE USER**



**SHARON
LOWRIE**

CEO OF BE CARING

“Being employee owned and keeping our values at the heart of everything we do has been a key factor to the organisation thriving during this period of Covid-19. The dedication of colleagues across the organisation has ensured the safety of our service users and Care Workers and we have continued to deliver high quality care and enhance the lives of our wonderful service users.

Our commissioners have been a great support over this Covid period and for this we would like to say a huge thank you.

We have significant ambition as an organisation to transform social care, to really value our Care Workers who work tirelessly in our communities and to realise the benefits this will bring to the wider healthcare system. We look forward to working in partnership with our commissioners to achieve this ambition.”



PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORTING THE SYSTEM

As the primary home care provider in South Leeds, we're an established partner and embedded within some of the local networks, for example: Morley Local Care Partnership (LCP) and Beeston and Middleton LCP. In response to the pandemic, we re-formed quickly to understand how we could work together to provide a response for residents.

During lockdown, many vital support services had to shut their doors, such as: day centres, community centres, and community groups. This left the most vulnerable in society at risk of isolation, loneliness, domestic violence, and lack of the basic essentials such as food and heating.

As part of our emergency planning, we contacted service users one by one about their care service. We reviewed and agreed with the individual, what was essential, preferable and non-essential. We were able to identify potential gaps, shortfalls in service and implement new approaches, this included:

- Reviewing our care services and **identified people we support who were at increasing risk of loneliness and isolation.** We contacted people, checking-in and offering 'Wellbeing Calls', and responding appropriately, e.g. additional 'pop-in' calls.
- **Sharing of information and best practice** in an emergency response through the LCPs, for example, designing a Mental Health Leaflet for all partners to share with people locally.

- **Distribution of 26,000 PPE face masks to local VCS** - distributed via Local Authority Mutual Aid response. As a social enterprise, we wanted to contribute in some way, ensuring local voluntary sector groups had the face masks needed to continue to support people who needed it.
- **Forming partnerships with local communities, neighbourhood networks and partnerships** for example: establishing a **partnership and referral pathway with Groundworks**, matching people, such as those shielding or more isolated, with volunteers, and identifying other avenues for support and intervention. Groundworks matched volunteers to vulnerable or shielding service users by interest, character or level of need (using a profile). One of our Team Leaders then met with and introduced the volunteer with the Service user.



BE KIND: GIVING BACK TO OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

During the pandemic, we are delighted to have been able to support local organisations. We donated 26,000 face masks to the voluntary sector, keeping our communities safe.

"Thank you for your very kind donation of face masks to our charity. They have been a tremendous help to staff and volunteers, enabling us to home-visit safely, to provide shopping, medication, and hot meals to the vulnerable and isolated elderly whom we serve. Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity."

ACTION FOR GIPTON ELDERLY

"Thank you so much for your generous donation of masks, which we are using for volunteers and OPAL staff as we support vulnerable and older people though the pandemic. Your donation is very much appreciated!"

OLDER PEOPLE'S ACTION IN THE LOCALITY



COMMUNITY TEAMS PILOT

Throughout Covid, our commissioners have continued to work alongside us in developing a new model of care in Morley, which started officially in September 2020. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, we've continued to work together, virtually, to make sure this pilot gets off the ground. It's an exciting time for some of our colleagues who'll be supporting people, flexibly, in their own homes and in their communities.

Working closely with the Morley Social Work team, community nurses and the voluntary sector, we'll support people to do more for themselves, to maintain their independence and continue to have fulfilling lives.



PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY:

ONLINE PROVIDER MEETINGS

Our commissioners established virtual online provider meetings, supporting us to connect with other providers, building stronger relationships, meeting more frequently to understand and share pandemic related issues and challenges, and our approaches to tackling those. Topics covered included: PPE - sharing information with us about latest supply and stock, changes to guidance and regulations, Mutual Aid - with a spreadsheet to coordinate cover in the event of any staffing issues, and information around volunteering services - offering activities such as befriending) for our Service users.

**LYZE DUDLEY, OUR
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER SAID;**

“The provider meetings were a sounding board for everyone involved. In this highly stressful situation, the mutual support was valuable and the ability to discuss our struggles and solutions with others in the same situation was incredibly helpful.”



KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

As an organisation, our Care and Support Workers use PPE for almost all direct care and support, but medical-grade masks were only used by exception before the Covid pandemic.

In the first few months of the pandemic, our existing supply chain for PPE was re-directed to the NHS, which meant working tirelessly to procure supplies through other channels, including importation.

We received supported from our Local Authority, who've been fantastic in supplying us with PPE, particularly the fluid resistant (IIR) and FFP2 masks. Although we had to ration the supply, often limited to day-by-day need, we were never without PPE. Although it was a challenge sourcing masks in March and April in particular, **only 7% of our colleagues** in Leeds disagreed with the statement **“I've had the right amount and correct PPE and equipment to do my work”**

Our Team Leaders delivered PPE and other equipment to colleagues, reducing travel and contact with the office, preventing exposure to, and spread of the virus.



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87%

of Leeds colleagues said they had felt safe at work over the Covid-19 period



“When I returned to work (after self-isolating), and even though I am a driver, Team Leaders went out of their way to bring me PPE, so I didn't have to go to the office.”

SAMANTHA - CARE WORKER





ATTRACTING & RETAINING TALENT

We made our interview and induction process virtual, moving to video-based interviews and online learning units to replace approximately half of our classroom delivery. Learning units such as Manual Handling and Emergency Aid continued to be classroom-based. To maintain social distancing, we halved the number of attendees in every induction.

94%



of colleagues who joined during Covid* think the induction and training provided was good enough for them to perform their role. (6% more than average) *17 respondents.

We moved to values-based recruitment, changing our interview questions to attract people new to care, with the same passionate, people-driven ethos as Be Caring, into the sector. Since the start of Covid, we've refocusing our recruitment and onboarding strategy.

In the 5 months from March to July 2020, we recruited 53 new Care Workers in Leeds and reduced our turnover by 25%. The overall improvements in recruitment and retention means that we're now providing 3,600 hours of essential care and support to 293 people. Despite the

Covid pandemic, we've continued to take on new care packages, providing care and support to an additional 82 people, and their families.

To ensure the welfare of new starters, we refined our onboarding process to include a Welcome Call from Sarah Keenan, the Service Manager after their first day and our Recruitment Officer, Clair Byrne conducts check-in calls at week 1, 2, 4, 8 and 12 - until their first "Be Supported" session, which is then conducted quarterly.

50%



We've reduced our onboarding time across Be Caring by 50%, from 38 days to 19 days.



BE PROUD: CASE STUDY

DEMI
ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER

Demi is one of our first Care Workers to go through the Assistant Practitioner qualification. She recently joined our Leeds service as a Care Worker, and is known for being articulate, caring and is great at supporting people whilst encouraging them to remain independent.

The Assistant Practitioner role is different from any that we've had before and will run in conjunction with our Community Teams pilot. Demi will be one of our pioneers in bringing about a huge culture shift, introducing a Community Teams model, where Care Workers are empowered to act locally rather relying on schedules and tasks set by the office team.

As an Assistant Practitioner, some of Demi's time is protected so that she can focus her efforts on non-direct care such as; making referrals and supporting access to local voluntary groups, supporting Care Workers to identify better ways of working, creating circles of support, and understanding how care fits within the wider sector. Demi, and other Assistant Practitioners, will complete 12 weeks of placements over 2 years with community nurses and other partners, increasing skills and knowledge in assessment, clinical and therapeutic tasks.

The 2 year course is a great opportunity and provides a recognised career path in the Care Sector, which Demi is really excited about!



PROTECTING LIVELIHOODS

Whilst many companies saw vast levels of redundancies, closures and staff being furloughed, we saw a sustained rise in recruitment. Since the start of Covid, we've quadrupled the number of Care Workers on block contracts in Leeds. This means, that those colleagues are paid from the start to the end of their shift, which includes all non-direct care and delivery time.



61

Care Workers in Leeds are employed on block contracts.

We've made zero redundancies and the average income of our Care Workers has increased as a result of increased delivery and more effective co-ordination and rota management.



We offered employees who needed to shield the opportunity to be placed on furlough until they were safe to return to work. We placed 14 colleagues in Leeds (45 colleagues across Be Caring), on the Government Job Retention scheme for shielding purposes, this includes some people who are living with someone who is shielding. This meant protecting colleagues, keeping them safe at home, without sustained or substantial loss of income.

With the Covid-19 support measures implemented by our Local Authorities and commissioners, we've supplemented the income of Care and Support Workers who've lost working hours (income) due to service users shielding or temporarily ceasing their care service. Across Be Caring, in the 5 months from April to August, we made 357 Covid Top Up Payments at an average of 11 hours per payment, protecting the income, and minimising the impact on our Care and Support Workers.



7hrs

The average income of a Care Worker in Leeds has increased by 7 hours per week (compared to 3 hours per week across Be Caring).



45

We made 45 Covid Top Up payments to Care Workers in Leeds, at an average of 11 hours per payment (April to August 2020).



"We are all extremely grateful for changes Sharon has made, and the effort she puts in to communicate with us. She is always there to help us out and talk to us. I was low on hours previous month and was given a Covid top-up payment - I will always be grateful for that."

LINA - CARE WORKER

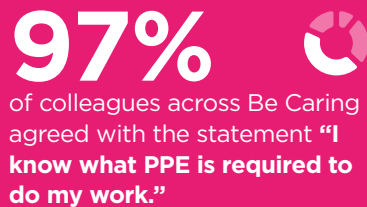


OUR PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

As a result of our analysis (including the Covid-19 survey feedback), as a company Be Caring are moving to the following outcomes (with some slight variations within each service, depending on their individual circumstances, strengths and needs):

We will continue to support culture change, instil Covid-safe guidance, and improve colleague wellbeing through effective communication and access to mental health and financial support

As a company, we have created an environment where all employees feel protected and safe at work. Throughout the pandemic we have communicated clear guidance around PPE (including how to access supplies) and the latest government guidelines and have regularly sent out messages of support and gratitude to our colleagues. In our recent colleague survey:



During the Covid-19 period, we employed two part-time Digital Content Creators to help the business to continue to improve internal engagement and external communications.

We will continue our digital recruitment and induction process

Those who had started working at Be Caring during the Covid-19 period were asked if the induction and training provided was good enough for them to perform their role:



This is a fantastic achievement given the scale and pace of change, and that new starters were entering their role at such an uncertain time. As a result of working digitally, and with the temporary changes to the DBS process, our onboarding time halved.

We're continuing our digital/virtual recruitment process and will retain online learning units for more experienced Care and Support Workers.



OUR PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

We'll continue to establish and promote opportunities for teamwork and recognise colleagues' good work

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we've developed greater team working through virtual team meetings and homeworking. Some colleagues will continue homeworking, retaining flexibility, while continuing to maintain or increase productivity levels.

As an employee owned social enterprise, we recognise the importance of our colleagues in the lives of those we support. Alongside better terms and conditions for those working in the care sector, we want to protect the wellbeing of our employees, and retain them. The respect and care we offer our colleagues, is then passed on to our service users. We're launching a new colleague recognition scheme - the Above and Bee-yond Award and will launch a local Voice initiative in the new year.

98%



of colleagues across Be Caring agreed with the statement **"My work has made a difference to those I support."**

89%



of colleagues across Be Caring agreed with the statement **"My work has been valued."**

Leeds Service Priority: Transforming the Care Sector

Our partnerships with Leeds City Council and other health, social and voluntary sector organisations are laying the foundations for a new care model - to re-design care delivery and enhance the experience of those people and families we support. The Community Teams pilot, which includes the Assistant Practitioner roles, will transform the way we work in Leeds.

We're empowering our colleagues and creating the space for them to be embedded in their local communities. Using a neighbourhood approach, our Care Workers will support people, with their families, to co-design their overall care from the beginning, moving away from task and time to a truly outcomes focussed, person-centred approach using our 7 Ways to Being Well model.

As an employee-owned business, we're passionate about having an engaged, happy workforce, who are paid fairly for their hard work and dedication. We continue to challenge care commissioning, working collaboratively to design and offer alternative funding and payment mechanisms that free resources in the system while remaining within financial constraints.

One of our ambitions is to be able to move into a fully salaried workforce, giving our Care Workers a stable and regular income. Currently, 61 of our Care Workers are on a block pay contract, compared to 11 in February 2020; we've continued to invest in our workforce despite the pandemic. We'll continue to offer and move people on to block pay contracts, supported by strong growth, which will enable us to move resources from the back-office to the front-line.



SUMMARY

When interviewed and surveyed about the Covid-19 outbreak, colleagues across the company have said they have felt more bonded and closer-knit during this time, and that Be Caring have promoted an open culture where the employees feel valued and safe at work.

We focused our efforts on sourcing the correct PPE and keeping colleagues updated with changing guidance and practices. We acted quickly and implemented processes needed to ensure we kept our colleagues safe and protected those we provide care and support for. We've continued to go above and beyond for the people we support, with inspirational stories and examples of colleagues doing the smallest things to improve the lives and wellbeing of those we support.

During the pandemic, we've been able to protect all our employees' jobs and offered them financial stability via the furlough scheme and wage top-ups for those who would otherwise have suffered a loss of income as a result of Covid-19.

Throughout the pandemic, our colleagues have been a credit to us. Their hard work has resulted in stability and growth across the business. As a result, we are delighted that we were able to reward every employee with a £30 or £50 bonus in July, and plan to offer a larger bonus at Christmas.

We'll continue to work collaboratively with our commissioners and system partners so that we can be the Provider of choice for everyone, making a real difference to the lives of those we support and having a positive impact on the communities we serve - becoming a community asset and integrating with volunteers and voluntary sector groups.

"Be Caring is the best company I have worked with and I will recommend it to whoever is willing to work with a care company."

NADEGE - CARE WORKER - LEEDS

