

OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BE CARING - OCTOBER 2020 - LIVERPOOL SERVICE





LIVERPOOL OVERVIEW

Be Caring have been delivering care in Liverpool for over 2 years. We have over 100 colleagues providing nearly 3,000 hours of care and support every week to over 176 people in areas including: Anfield, Fazakerley Croxteth, Norris Green, West Derby, Old Swan, Dovecot, Knotty Ash Wavertree, Picton, Childwall, Gartson, Speke and Belle Vale.

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 our Care workforce, reducing our turnover and responding to the needs of those we support.

Going above and beyond for our service users such as: deep cleaning homes, celebrating birthdays with those who were shielding, and collecting shopping and prescriptions.

↳ **Keeping people safe**, communicating the latest guidelines, ensuring we kept all staff up to date with the latest practice, and that they have the correct and right amount of PPE.

“I believe that in the Liverpool branch we have pulled together remarkably during this time, we have grown as a branch, and all our care staff have been really willing to help throughout.”

JACQUI - CO-ORDINATOR



**TINA
WELCH**
OPERATIONS
MANAGER

“I would just like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your continued support, commitment, and hard work.”

During these difficult and unprecedented times, I can honestly say it has been an extremely positive and collaborative period, but also recognise the challenges that we have all had to face.

I recognise the dedicated work that is ongoing under difficult and concerning circumstances, delivering exceptional care ensuring both yourself and customers are kept safe and well.

I feel a great sense of pride for our team in Liverpool, what we have achieved over the last few months is not by accident, it is our biggest success yet, and the best part is that you have made it possible - here's to a bright future!”

OUR COMMISSIONERS THANK YOU



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, such as grants and emergency supplies for PPE, providing a taxi service for Care Workers when public transport was reduced.

Your unwavering, responsive support over the last few months has been incredible, and we are really looking forward to continuing our strong partnership moving forward.





OUR CULTURE: GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

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 Liverpool 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:

- ↳ **Organising birthday parties** (including a 100th birthday!) for those who were shielding and so otherwise would have spent their birthday alone.
- ↳ **Shopping for essentials** such as groceries, organising food and collecting medications.
- ↳ **Spending extra time keeping service users company**, chatting and doing jigsaws with them
- ↳ **Supporting service users and colleagues emotionally** who were struggling with lockdown, or have lost a loved one due to Covid-19.

- ↳ **Stepping up to do tasks outside their usual remit**, to help out colleagues and ensure safe and quality care for service users, for example; extra cleaning, shopping and picking up medications, contacting GPs, pharmacies and other services.
- ↳ **Covering shifts at short notice**, to help out colleagues who needed to self-isolate or were struggling with childcare.
- ↳ **Deep cleaning service users homes** to ensure they had comfortable and hygienic living conditions (both whilst on call, and also in their own time).
- ↳ **Keeping a service user company while they were in hospital**. A Care Worker visited the service user in their free time until their relatives arrived.
- ↳ **Baking pies and cakes for colleagues** to boost morale.



BE PROUD: CASE STUDY

MICHELLE - CARE WORKER

Michelle is a new employee at Be Caring in Liverpool and joined us as Covid-19 was at its peak. She had never worked in the care industry before, so her role as a Care Worker was brand new to her. From day one, Michelle has worked with great skill and enthusiasm, wholly embracing our core values, going above and beyond for her service users, and being a beacon of positivity and inspiration for her colleagues.

One of her service users called the branch office to compliment her as she had taken extra time out of her day to deep clean his house from top to bottom. His feedback included, “the floors are so clean I could eat off them!” Michelle has regularly gone shopping for vulnerable service users in her free time, so they don’t have to worry about leaving their home or struggling to get the groceries and household items they need.

In the recent staff survey, one of her colleagues wrote: “Michelle’s values and compassion that she shows to each service user she visits is outstanding... She lives and breathes the be caring values!”

“I don’t single out anybody when it comes to caring. I try and go above and beyond for every individual that I go in to care for. If I can make people smile while in their homes caring for them, then I see it as a positive to both mine and their day.”

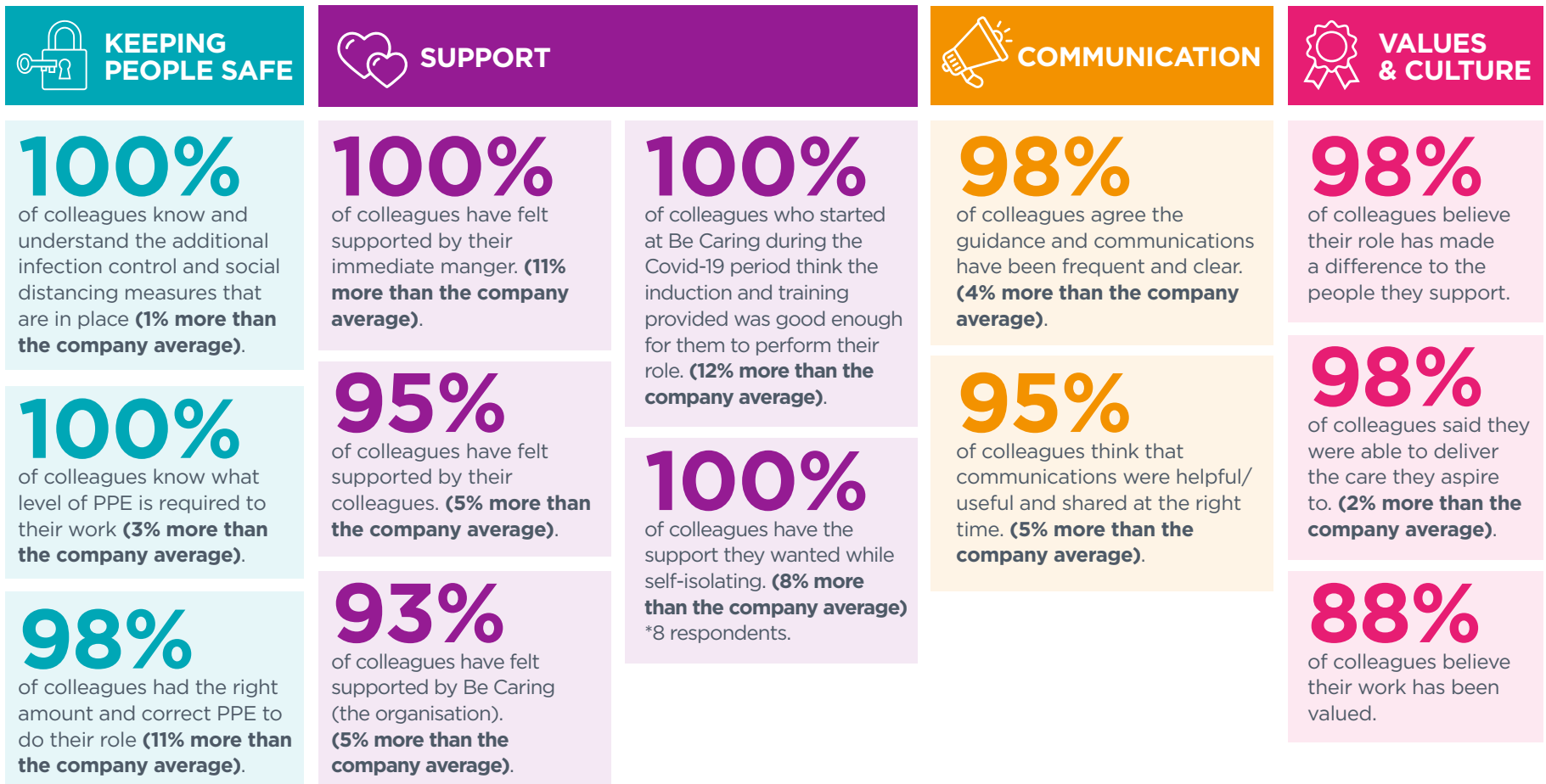
ALIX - CARE WORKER



KEY FINDINGS IN LIVERPOOL



On the 4th July 2020, we sent out a company-wide survey about Covid-19. Of 325 responses, 45 colleagues from Liverpool completed the survey. The headlines from this survey are:



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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.
- ↳ **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.
- ↳ **Keeping the individuals and families we support safe**, many of whom are vulnerable.

- ↳ **Ensuring employees' wellbeing** through more frequent contact with their teams and promoting access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- ↳ **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 another little message to thank everyone at Be Caring Liverpool and beyond for doing such a fabulous job. We see time and time the struggles you and other frontline workers must face every day whilst caring for others and keeping yourselves and your families safe. Just to let you know we are thinking about you all with gratitude and hope you all have a very safe journey through this terrible time.”

DAUGHTER OF A LIVERPOOL 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.”

LIVERPOOL CIC & COMMISSIONER MEETINGS

PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY: ONLINE PROVIDER MEETINGS

We're part of an established local care provider partnership, made up of more than 20 local providers. In response to the pandemic, we established virtual meetings, through the CIC as well as weekly meetings with our commissioner to understand and share pandemic related issues and challenges, and our approaches to tackling those. Topics covered included: PPE - sharing information about latest stock and supply, changes to guidance and regulations, resiliency for cover in the event of any staffing issues, and information around covid-related hospital admissions and submitting information weekly on Carers and people we're supporting who were shielding/self-isolating and those who were symptomatic or who'd tested positive.

Tina Welch, our Operations Manager said; **"The meetings offered reassurance about how we were coping and responding to the pandemic. The frequency of the meetings meant we could ask any questions, and it felt like we were in together and on the same page and we were there to support each other."**



CASE STUDY: COMCAB TAXI SERVICE

Due to the ceasing and reduction of public transport services, some staff were struggling to get to their service user's homes. Taxis were fully funded by Liverpool City Council, in partnership with ComCab, who provided a fleet of Covid-secure taxis, with regular sanitising and purpose-made partitions for social distancing. This service was vital in ensuring our vulnerable service users got the care and support they needed at the right time and was used over 40 times by our Liverpool branch. Operations Manager, Tina Welch, says, **"it was invaluable, and it really helped us out when we needed it most, and got our services their care on time."**





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. Liverpool City Council set up a website to request emergency PPE when supplies were in high demand. Orders of supplies such as masks, hand gel, and gloves were delivered the next day, if ordered before 2pm. This scheme was fully funded by the council and has been invaluable to us - running until the end of August.

Although it was a challenge sourcing masks in March and April in particular, **only 5% of our colleagues in Liverpool disagreed with the statement "I've had the right amount and correct PPE and equipment to do my work"**

91% 
of Liverpool colleagues said they had felt safe at work over the Covid-19 period

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.

"When I've needed PPE that was running low phone calls to the office to ask for drop off. They always made sure I had it that day or next day. They were brilliant."
PAULA - 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.

100%

of colleagues who joined during Covid* think the induction and training provided was good enough for them to perform their role. (12% more than average) *12 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 58 new Care Workers in Liverpool and reduced our turnover by 16%. The overall improvements in recruitment and retention means that we're now providing nearly 3,000 hours of essential care and support to 176 people. Despite the Covid pandemic, we've continued to take on new care

packages, providing care and support to an additional 23 people, and their families.

To ensure the welfare of new starters, we refined our onboarding process to include a Welcome call from Tina Welch, the Operations Manager after their first day, and our Vicky Sinclair (Co-ordinator) 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.



"As a new Care Worker, I would like to say that the office team gave me all the support over the phone that I needed. I can't name just one person. because they all contributed. My first day on my own, I kept calling them and they helped me with the information I needed. As time has gone on, I've called them less, but they are still there and help when I need it... I can't fault the help and support I have had."

ALISON - CARE WORKER



BE PROUD: CASE STUDY

LAUREN - RECRUITER

Laura made the move into recruitment, from a role as our office administrator in Liverpool. She's been working to drive recruitment in Merseyside, liaising with our recruitment team at our Tyneside office. Since she's been in the post, we've noted an amazing rise in new care workers joining our team - well done Lauren!

When interviewing prospective care workers, Lauren doesn't necessarily look for previous experience, she looks at how the candidate aligns with our company values, and how motivated they are to do an amazing job of providing care for our service users.

During the pandemic, she's had to completely transform the way she conducts interviews, running them virtually via WhatsApp video calling. This has proved to be a really positive move, as it has removed some barriers to people attending, so the dropout rate for first stage interviews has greatly reduced.



PROTECTING LIVELIHOODS

Whilst many companies saw vast levels of redundancies, closures and staff being furloughed, we saw a sustained rise in recruitment. We've made zero redundancies and the average income of our Care Workers has increased through 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 3 colleagues in Liverpool (45 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 15 hours per payment, protecting the income, and minimising the impact on our Care and Support Workers.

14



We made 14 Covid Top Up payments to Care Workers in Liverpool, at an average of 13 hours per payment (April to August 2020).



"I've been able to pay my bills, it's been a relief knowing that I can be home with my children and knowing that I've still got a job to come back to."

DONNA - CARER





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:

97% of colleagues across Be Caring agreed with the statement "I know what PPE is required to do my work."

94% of colleagues across Be Caring agreed that guidance and communications had been frequent and clear.

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:



88% of colleagues across Be Caring* agreed that they had a good enough induction and training for them to perform in their role. *52 respondents.

87% of new colleagues across Be Caring* said they felt settled in their new role at Be Caring. *52 respondents.

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."**

Liverpool Service Priority: Room for Growth

As a service, we've already made significant headway in attracting new Care Workers and retaining that talent. Shifting to a more digital process meant we were able to remove one of our most significant barriers - our office location, which often meant potential new starters dropped out of the process, as it's tricky to access by public transport.

Our ambition as a service is to find a new office location, which is more centrally located, with more space for colleagues. We hope this move will continue to support our drive to attract talent to Be Caring, which in turn, will enable us to grow our capacity to deliver high quality care to more people who need it.

As an employee-owned organisation, our team and our culture are important to us. We envision our new office as a place for colleagues to come together, socialise, share best practice and learn from, and support each other.

We also see this location as being central to us having a real impact in local communities, being visible with our partners and making those important community connections.





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.



"I've said this before, but I do love my job, it gives me so much joy to know that we can help someone, give them love and make them happy."

LETISHA - CARE WORKER - LIVERPOOL