

# OUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BE CARING - OCTOBER 2020 - MANCHESTER SERVICE





# MANCHESTER OVERVIEW

Be Caring have been delivering care in Manchester for over 13 years. We have over 125 colleagues providing more than 3,000 weekly hours of care and support every week to over 220 people in Wythenshawe, Sale, Trafford, Mosside and Burnage.

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 Manchester 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:

↳ **Going above and beyond for our service users** such as; deep cleaning homes, celebrating birthdays with those who were shielding, 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.

↳ **Pursuing development and innovation**, rolling out a new digital care planning system to aid our Carers in delivering safe, quality care. This has been successfully implemented, even in the face of the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 outbreak.



## KAY-LEIGH IGO

OPERATIONS MANAGER

“I would like to thank all the staff at Manchester for all their hard work. We have gone above and beyond for our service users on so many occasions, such as: cleaning service users’ houses in your own time, taking service users to Specsavers, the doctors, and countless other tasks.

Thank you all for keeping your service users, yourselves, and your families safe.

I am extremely proud to work with such amazing people.”

“I provided care for a Service User with Covid-19, when family members were not visiting their home in lockdown. They felt happy to see us and felt like family, we did their shopping in our break time for their day to day needs.”

VASANTHA - CARER

# 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; distributing PPE and implementing covid-19 measures to ease the financial pressures. We're pleased to have been part of the Integrated Neighbourhood Team Covid response through the Community Huddles, sharing organisation updates, understanding the impact of Covid on the wider system and partners, and co-ordinating localised action to emerging needs.

We're looking forward to continuing joint working with our commissioners and partners, delivering on our shared goals of providing outstanding care in the community as part of the Integrated Neighbourhood Team.





# 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 Manchester has been our hardworking, passionate team. There have been some truly incredible examples of Carers going above and beyond for the people we support, and their fellow colleagues:

- ↘ Carers **contacting and visiting service users** in their free time to reduce isolation during lockdown.
- ↘ Supporting service users to **spend time in their garden**, to enjoy the fresh air and improve their mental wellbeing.

**“On a morning call I visited Winnie, she told me it was her birthday (100th) but she didn’t have anyone coming to see her. On my lunch visit I bought her a birthday card, and this seemed to cheer her up and she still has it up on her windowsill”**

**MICHELLE - CARER**

- ↘ **Organising birthday parties**, giving cards, flowers and cakes, to those who were shielding, and who would have otherwise spent their birthday alone.
- ↘ **Shopping for essentials** such as groceries, collecting medications and organising food parcels.
- ↘ **Stepping up to do tasks outside their usual remit**, to support colleagues and ensure safe and quality care for service users, for example, shopping, baking cakes and keeping garden’s tidy
- ↘ **Covering shifts at short notice**, to help out colleagues who needed to self-isolate or were struggling with childcare.
- ↘ **Deep cleaning service users’ homes and gardening**. One Care Worker helped build a new connection with a neighbour who then continued to undertake the hedge trimming for our service user.



## BE PROUD: CASE STUDY CODIE - CARER

**Though she is one of our younger carers in Manchester, Codie is incredibly mature, and incredibly dedicated to her job. She is popular within our team and is constantly requested by our service users!**

One of her service users has a dog, however she struggles with mobility and was anxious about her dog getting enough exercise. Every single day, once she has completed this service user’s call, she takes her dog for a walk in her own time, to make sure her service user (and her lovely pet!) is happy and well. We are so lucky to have people like Codie on our team, who are so kind and caring!

One colleague said, “Codie’s service users adore her. They light up when she walks in and really look forward to seeing her. Codie is a fantastic carer and supports them in every way possible.”

**“We play our service users their favourite songs from when they were younger - for some of them, we have had CDs made with their favourite songs on! They say that they don’t know what they would do without us and they really appreciate what we do for them. We bring them cakes, flowers and cards for their birthdays... there isn’t anything we wouldn’t do for our service users!”**

**NATASHA - CARER**



# KEY FINDINGS IN MANCHESTER



On the 4th July 2020, we sent out a company-wide survey to all our colleagues. Of 325 respondents, 39 colleagues from Manchester completed this survey. The headlines are:

## KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

# 97%

of colleagues know what level of PPE is required to their work **(1% more than the company average)**.

# 94%

of colleagues know & understand the additional infection control and social distancing measures that are in place.

# 94%

of colleagues knew where to get tested for Covid-19, once testing became more widely available.

# 86%

of colleagues had the right amount and correct PPE to do their role.

## SUPPORT

# 86%

of colleagues have felt supported by Be Caring as an organisation.

# 89%

of colleagues have felt supported by their immediate manager.

# 89%

of colleagues have felt supported by their colleagues.

## COMMUNICATION

# 95%

of colleagues agree the guidance and communications have been frequent and clear. **(1% more than the company average)**.

# 92%

of colleagues think that communications were helpful and honest. **(1% more than the company average)**.

## VALUES & CULTURE

# 97%

of colleagues believe their role has made a difference to the people they support.

# 94%

of colleagues said they are able to deliver the care they aspire to.

# 89%

of colleagues feel their work has been valued.



# 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.



## 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 carers 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 carers 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.”

**“I just wanted to say a massive thank you to the Management Team across the Board from Head Office, HR, Operational Managers & Team Leaders. The way Be Caring have worked tirelessly with the ongoing sourcing of the appropriate PPE required for every Carer, enabling them to be safe and able to provide the very best care and support possible to each and every Service User.”**

**SUE - CARER**



# NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS

The Covid-19 outbreak prompted a local response to emergency planning, through the Wythenshawe (Brooklands) & Northenden Neighbourhood Business Continuity Huddle, involving a range of cross-sector partners. It began in mid-March for the initial stages of emergency planning and initially meetings were twice weekly.

As the primary care provider in the area, we're an integral partner, sharing information and being part of a joined-up response for those most isolated and vulnerable in the local community. Using a risk rating tool, we identified and shared the main themes affecting those we support across Wythenshawe, Brooklands and Northenden, such as: loneliness, access to food, and prescriptions.

The Community Huddles supported quick responses to emerging needs, taking co-ordinated action on issues and urgent situations arising with frontline services. Topics of discussion and co-ordinated responses included:

↳ **PPE supply and stock**, supporting Age UK through a community project aimed at reducing isolation through making non-surgical masks.

- ↳ **Identification of most 'at risk' or vulnerable service users**; cross-referencing information to enable targeted and co-ordinated support, where no-one fell through the gaps in provision.
- ↳ **Supporting hospital discharge** to ease pressure in the system.
- ↳ **Mental health support for communities and colleagues**; raising awareness and sharing information to support people with anxiety, worry around PPE, loneliness & isolation, domestic violence, and wellbeing.
- ↳ **Promoting access to local services**, such as 'hot hubs' for testing, food bank information, distributing food and wellbeing packs, which were given to our Carers who distributed them to our most vulnerable service users.
- ↳ **Covid-19 testing information** and infection rates, identifying potential mutual aid support for shopping or medication, for example.



## CASE STUDY: DIGITAL INCLUSION SCHEME

**Local Authorities, neighbourhood teams and other partner agencies worked together to provide digital upskilling and support for those not confident in using technology. People were supported to; connect to the Internet, make video calling, order shopping online, set-up and access internet banking, and access NHS services online.**

Our Carers identified people we support, who were not able to access the Internet, some of whom were isolated, and had lost their community connection through day centre closures or family disruptions. We contacted people, and their families, provided access to devices with 24GB of free data, and supported them to connect to the Internet.

The digital inclusion scheme had a positive impact on the lives of those who participated, with people being able to make video calls to family using Facebook and WhatsApp, at a time when they were feeling increasingly lonely, isolated, and vulnerable.



# 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 11% of our colleagues in Manchester** disagreed with the statement **"I've had the right amount and correct PPE and equipment to do my work"**.

## 78%



**of Manchester 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.

**"We worked as a team and wear all PPE to protect our service user and protect us."**

REHANA - CARER







# ATTRACTING & RETAINING TALENT

We made our interview and induction process virtual, moving to video-based interviews and online learning units to replace 50% 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 per induction.

**50%**

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



In the 5 months from March to July 2020, Manchester recruited 37 new Carers and our turnover more than halved. The overall improvements in recruitment and retention means that we're now providing 3,000 hours of essential care and support to 199 people. Despite the Covid pandemic, we've continued to take on new care packages, providing care and support to an additional 31 people (and their families).

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.

**"I worked as a double one on Sunday... on that Sunday I realised that I have grown, I can do the job by myself and think through the solution what should I do and how. I sorted the problems and being a carer! I have learnt from the company and most of the colleagues I have worked with. I am grateful for the opportunity the company offer me. I know nothing about care at the beginning!"**

**YVONNE - CARER**





# 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 as a result of increased delivery and more effective co-ordination and rota management.

## 2hours



The average income of a Care Worker in Manchester has increased by 2 hours per week.

We offered employees who needed to shield the opportunity to be placed on furlough until they were safe to return to work. We placed 10 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. We have been conducting regular wellbeing calls to these colleagues. One of our furloughed employees said:

**"It's not easy being stuck at home relying on other people for everything when you've always been so independent, knowing your friends and colleagues are out doing an amazing job, but thankfully they do keep me in the loop. Despite isolation I can't repeat often enough, how proud I am of the whole team and knowing I'm still a part of that."**

SUE - CARER

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 13 hours per payment, protecting the income, and minimising the impact on our Care and Support Workers.

## 74



We made 74 Covid Top Up payments to Care Workers in Manchester, at an average of 13 hours per payment (April to August 2020).



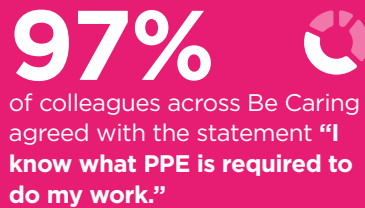


# OUR PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

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."**

## Manchester Service Priority: Integrating with the Local System

In response to Covid, we've established new links, working closely with partner organisations such as health, education, housing, police and voluntary sector organisations through the local Neighbourhood Partnership Group and the Neighbourhood Business Continuity Huddle, led and co-ordinated by health colleagues. These groups created a platform for us to work jointly, share information and respond quickly to the needs of local people when faced with the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Building on these relationships, we'll continue working together to ensure we're providing holistic, quality care to the most vulnerable in our community. Our priority will be furthered by the introduction of 2 Assistant Practitioners, who have been recruited and will be undertaking their 2 years of training, including 12 weeks of placements with partner organisations.

Using a Community Teams approach, our Assistant Practitioners and Carers 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. We've been invited to attend and share our learning from our Leeds 'Fulfilling Lives' pilot within the Workforce Planning Workshop for the local Integrated Neighbourhood Team.

In the coming months we'll be mobilising our new contract, supporting the incoming transfer of people with care packages into Be Caring. Our priority will be to continue to develop and embed our improved recruitment practices to support this work.



# 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.**

**"Never worked for an agency like this one, who puts their colleagues health or concerns at the front as well as their service users. Take time to listen to what you have to say."**

**ANONYMOUS - CARER - MANCHESTER**

