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SPECIALIST CARE SERVICES PROVIDED IN YOUR HOME BY HELPING HANDS

www.helpinghands.co.uk

Specialist Care team outside Cramlington branch before closure, Sharon King (front far right) with Sandra Vitty.

Maintaining continuity of care as lockdown eases across UK

It's been an anxious and frustrating few months for service users, families and carers during this coronavirus outbreak.

Life as usual came to an abrupt halt in March and that meant many trips and outdoor activities stopped. While Helping Hands ensured continuity of care, our approach altered along with levels of provision.

Restrictions are only just starting to ease and as we start to understand what the



Hand sanitiser donations.

new normal will look like we will continue to monitor the situation and readjust our support in line with government and healthcare guidance.

Our MD, David Harrison, said: "To say that this has been quite unlike any other situation or crisis the organisation has faced is an understatement. The challenges have been significant and the stress on the team and families we support has been constant.

"I am so proud of how everyone across the organisation has stepped up to meet this challenge. Our carers do their best to help service users have as active and fulfilling a life as possible – even in a lockdown environment."

From March onwards, management had to cope with many new situations, which

included reorganising branch offices and effectively closing the specialist care office in Cramlington to meet social distancing rules. This meant all office support staff transferred to a new system of remote, home-based working. Investment in technology in recent years meant this happened without disruption to care and support.

Sharon King, head of specialist care services at Helping Hands, explained: "The transition to remote home-working was fairly straightforward. Staff quickly adjusted. Some of our staff had to self-isolate due to underlying health problems.

"But lockdown changed what we could and couldn't do with service users. Outside trips and short holiday breaks all came to a stop. Families often took a more active role in care provision.

"Naturally, everyone had to be even more mindful of protecting each other from the risk of catching the virus. This meant greater washing of hands and use of personal protective equipment, or PPE. We then had the constant struggle of securing regular supplies of gloves, aprons and face masks."



Face mask donations.

She said her team and carers had been overwhelmed by the support and love shown by many towards them. Sharon said: "Our service users, families and the wider public have been fantastic in the support and goodwill shown to the care community. The well-wishes and gifts that have been donated have made us proud of the critical work we provide at Helping Hands."

Lending a helping hand during lockdown



Kim Wood, Kyle Hartley, Sandra Robison.

Our carers haven't let lockdown stop all the fun and activity with service users during this difficult period.

For instance, carer Kim Wood has spent many hours over many days with service user Mary Young sprucing up the garden at her home in Cramlington.

Kyle Hartley, who suffers from juvenile Huntington's Disease, has taken out the paint and brushes to brighten the inside of his house. Carers Tim Storey and Ralph Staines – who provide 24/7 care and

support – helped Kyle turn one of his walls a brilliant blue.

Meanwhile service user Sandra Robison has turned her hand to becoming a 'domestic goddess' during lockdown, picking up new cooking skills. Here she's pictured baking sausage rolls at her home in Ashington (with a little bit of help from carer Amanda Wilson).

These are a small selection of our service users who, with a guiding Helping Hand, have put their lockdown time to good use.

Investing in our people



Hilary Graham.

Rachel White.

Terry Craggs.

We were recently pleased to announce the completion of three apprenticeships within specialist care.

Hilary Graham has been a forerunner and one of the first to achieve the New Level 3 Lead Adult Care Worker Apprenticeship. This is a very in-depth qualification and Hilary passed with flying colours, gaining a merit.

Rachel White achieved her Level 5 Higher Apprenticeship in Leadership and Management, demonstrating her impressive work-based knowledge and skills. Rachel did so well she is being highlighted as a case study by the training provider.

Terry Craggs also achieved his Level 5 Higher Apprenticeship in Leadership and Management. Terry really enjoyed his research project and went above and beyond to get evidence-based research around alcohol and drug abuse both nationally and locally.

Staff career development



Alan Forman.

Denise Wilson.



Marilyn Foreman.

Joss Lee.



Tracy Summers.

Bianca Robertson.

Training and career development are vital ways we deliver improved levels of service to our users.

We are committed to providing opportunities for all our staff to grow and develop. During the year we have seen some of our hardworking and reliable staff take on new challenges and more responsibility. The following join our long-serving team of senior support workers.

Alan Forman, who has worked as a support worker since April 2009, and Denise Wilson who has been in a similar role since September 2015, have both been promoted to senior support workers.

Marilyn Foreman, who has worked for us since January 2009 as a support worker, has been taken on a senior support role.

Joss Lee, a support worker since January 2010, was promoted to a care supervisor.

Tracy Summers, who has worked with us since July 2016 as a support worker, was promoted to CSO in sept 2019.

Bianca Robertson, a coordinator since June 2018, decided she wanted to be more hands on and became a support worker for a while before rejoining the co ordinating team.