

Stories from the Pandemic



Some moving, personal stories
from carers, volunteers and staff

Stories from the Pandemic

“ Speculation about a national lockdown intensified during early March, but without any formal government directives, organisations and employers up and down the country were grappling with the conflict between making their own decisions or waiting for formal announcements.

The period leading up to 13th March 2020, when I formally announced that all of our building-based services were to be temporarily suspended, can only be described as a blur. Decisions were being made at pace, and given the lack of robust intelligence, gut instinct had to play a major role in deciding what was best to do.

As we closed our buildings, and transitioned all of our teams to working from home, I can remember saying to my Deputy ‘we are going to launch a Covid Emergency Response Service for local people’. And that we did. 48 hours later our Emergency Response Service launched, and little did we know that it would still be running over a year later.

Through practical support such as shopping, prescription collection, dog walking and transport, to emotional support such as wellbeing calls, befriending and counselling, to specialist clinical support to help people with dementia and their carers, and much more on top, local older people have told us time and time again that we have quite literally ‘saved their lives’ over the course of the last year.

Alongside our work across the community, our team at Stanhope Court, our residential care home for people living with dementia, came together to provide outstanding care and support for our

residents. During a period where there was such intense media scrutiny of care homes, our team embraced new rules, regulations and protocols, and during an unprecedented time when residents were not allowed physical contact with friends and family, staff stepped in to be their surrogate loved ones.

I have been so humbled by the way in which volunteers and staff, new and existing, have come together to lead such an immense response to the Covid crisis that saying ‘thank you’ simply does not feel enough.

Whether we like it or not, the extent to which health and care is delivered digitally has increased for the long haul, an issue which we will continue to lobby about to ensure that no-one is detrimentally affected through digital exclusion.

We truly hope that in sharing some of our colleagues’ and clients’ stories of the pandemic, it is an opportunity to not only give people an insight into some of the work and support we have delivered, but that it also provides a therapeutic opportunity for people to share some of their experiences, thoughts and feelings and hopefully will prompt others to do so too.

We dedicate this publication in memory of everyone in Wirral who lost their lives to Covid-19, and extend our deepest sympathies to their friends and families.

With very best wishes,

Jamie Anderson
Age UK Wirral CEO

”



March 2020

Helping me through the dark days

Jenny has experienced a very difficult time during the pandemic. Her husband has PTSD (ex-army) and Asperger's.

"It's been a lifeline, especially during the 'dark days' of the first lockdown and Simon's meltdown. It's someone outside the family to talk to, I can say things worrying me I can't say to them.

I have really missed the social interaction with largely staying inside during lockdown, been so anxious when I do go out. So, these phone calls really have mattered to me and still do."



Wellbeing Services

Timeline

- 16th Began setting up our Emergency Covid Service
- 18th Launched our Emergency Covid Service including Telephone Befriending, Shopping & Delivery, Information & Reassurance and Wellbeing Checks
- Memory boxes delivered to carers
- Moved legal surgery to phone appointments
- Set up Admiral Nurse weekly phone clinics
- 23th NATIONAL LOCKDOWN 1 COMMENCED
- Dementia carer support started well-being call to all known carers
- Reminder Finder groups were contacted on their allotted group day to carry some consistency of service
- 30th Welcomed colleagues from Involve NW to help with capacity
- Information and Advice service (Ask Us Wirral) moved online

April 2020

Age UK Wirral has been my lifeline

Jane is a carer for her husband whose dementia has markedly deteriorated during lockdown; she has really struggled at times to cope, she said:

"Age UK Wirral is a wonderful organisation. I do not know where I would have been without your help and support. Through my weekly wellbeing calls I have been able to access lots of other services such as the Admiral Nurses, Reminder Finders and got respite sorted indirectly through Age UK Wirral. Looking after someone with dementia is very hard, but especially so during this Pandemic.

"It has been a lifeline and I'm very lucky to have the connection especially as I am not online. All staff are there to answer anything and if not capable of answering will refer to someone who can. I really look forward to your call. You're so patient listening to me chatter on!"



Dementia & Carers Service

During the Pandemic we made over...

55,000

wellbeing calls to the lonely and isolated

During the Pandemic we received over...

32,800

calls from people needing help

May & June 2020

We knew we had to continue

“Being diagnosed with dementia at any time is difficult, but during a Pandemic it makes everything that much harder. Where do you go to get practical help and support?

Age UK Wirral set up Reminder Finders with grateful thanks to Lottery funding. This group had to adapt fast over the pandemic, we knew we had to continue care for our clients but how?

The first thing they did was to get as many as possible set up with Tablets support from the Council, Wirral Lions and others. We were able to give our carers a well-deserved break whilst their loved one engaged online with our team”. - Navigator



Dementia & Carers Service

Timeline

May

12th Weekly Peer Support virtual groups start

June

5th First Virtual Coffee Corner

8th Carers Week

Delivered plants to carers

12th Carers Support Quiz

During the Pandemic we distributed over...

670

digital tablets to carers, their loved ones and the lonely and isolated

During the Pandemic over...

30,000

people accessed help and support via our website'

July & August 2020

Thank you for precious time with my Mum

“Thank you for allowing me to spend extended time with my precious mum.

I can only praise you and all your wonderful staff for the amazing job that you continue to do each and every day, and especially in this difficult time. I know my mum will be well cared for as always and I can only hope and pray that I will be able to hug her again within the next few weeks. Please all stay safe and well, remembering that you all have loved ones too.

Big hugs and thank you once again for your kindness and support.” - **One of our carers**



Dementia & Carers Service

Timeline

July

4th LOCKDOWN 1 ENDED

16th Weekly Reminder Finder started online (5 groups per week)

August

1st Started working with Help My Street volunteer platform

5th Set up carer course

During the Pandemic we made over...

4,000

shopping trips for those who are isolated

During the Pandemic we handled over...

£120,000

worth of shopping bills

September & October 2020

Age UK Wirral Kids Club

“Home-schooling because of Corona Virus was a bit rubbish. There were good bits, I didn’t have to get up as early and I could stay in my pjs for longer! It was nice to have more time with my Mum as well, but I know she had to work as well as help me, and that could be hard to fit in. Being stuck in the house was boring – I missed things like my Rugby training, and seeing my friends in the playground.

Some of the people in Mum’s work set up a group for the kids to come together and have their own meeting, just like the adults were doing on Teams. It was fun to meet other kids who were doing school at home and also had Mums that were working for Age UK Wirral. We chatted about what we know about the charity and what we have learnt about our Mum’s jobs. We did some nice things in the meetings, like making our mums a poster to tell them how proud we were of them and the work that they do. We also thought of some fundraising ideas so that we can bring money to Age UK Wirral in the future and make sure that they can help more people. Hopefully all the kids will be able to meet up in the summer and meet each other properly as it was really nice to make new friends.

- Eric, Aged 9



Digital Inclusion Service

Timeline

September

- 1st Merger negotiations with HelpLink commences
- 30th Virtual carers course starts with input from a number of partners, ran for 6 weeks

During the Pandemic there were...

4,862

Admiral Nurse calls

November & December 2020

Much more than a meal

“A 92-year-old brother and sister we were helping had been using our services for some time, sadly the brother took ill and went to hospital where unfortunately he caught Covid and died. They had lived together their entire lives, we were able to deliver a much-needed Christmas Lunch on Christmas Day, the lady was so grateful as she hadn’t seen anyone that day and was very sad at it was her first Christmas alone in 92 years, she was so grateful for the time we took to visit her.

“One lady who received a Christmas Dinner had not seen another person in 6 months, she had had no conversation at all. We delivered a delicious lunch to her and she was absolutely thrilled to bits, we were able to have a chat while delivering, when she also told our staff that the card from Age UK Wirral was the only one she had received this year.” - Facilitator

Wellbeing Services

Timeline

November

1st LOCKDOWN 2 COMMENCES

December

- 2nd WIRRAL ENTERS TIER 3 RESTRICTIONS
- 7th LIPA students do online pantomime
- 25th Christmas dinners distributed

During the Pandemic we distributed over...

100

hot Christmas Dinners on Christmas Day

During the Pandemic we made over...

6,500

counselling contacts

January & February 2021

Living with cancer in a Pandemic *and* on a budget

Mr L currently lives with his long-term partner. He only has a small pension, and his partner is not eligible for any pensions and together they are not eligible for any significant benefits.

A Macmillan Admiral Nurse alerted Age UK Wirral to Mr L's case and said he had recently been diagnosed with cancer and was really struggling to afford taxis to and from the hospital and that he was not in a position to use public transport. The deputy CEO of Age UK Wirral allocated this case to the Going Home Team, who contacted Mr L. The staff member explained the service and that they would be able to take him to his chemotherapy appointments.

He was overjoyed. The system that was in place is that he was to let the staff member, who was taking him to his appointment, know of any future chemotherapy he was going to have, and they would liaise this to the admin staff who would ensure that these appointments were put in the diary and logged on our systems. These appointments usually were twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays, although sometimes they were varied, and staff would accommodate for this.

Mr L has been so happy with this service and now says, with the money he is saving on taxis he is able to buy some flowers in pots to make the exterior of his home look nice. - **Facilitator**



Out of Hospital Support

February

1st - Start second carers course running for 6 weeks

During the Pandemic we helped over...

1,100

people home from hospital

Timeline

January

- 1st - HelpLink merger takes place
- 4th - LOCKDOWN 3 COMMENCES
- All carer services virtual groups continue

March & April 2021

The cuppa that helps to relieve loneliness and isolation

"Delivering Afternoon Tea to Annie, she came hobbling to the door having broken her toe, she hadn't been out for months as she was shielding, all her family live in South Africa so she had been very lonely and had no contact with anyone. We stood on the step for 20 mins and just chatted, not the same with a mask on but we laughed and just enjoyed the moment, we lifted her spirits and that is what is so wonderful about this organisation.

"We also held online Afternoon Tea dates, this was a welcome relief from the tedium of lockdown, everyone logged on and chatted whilst enjoying the sandwiches and cakes, I think we all realised during these strange times how important friends and family are and just how much a good laugh makes us all feel better"

- One of our fabulous volunteers



Wellbeing Services

Timeline

March

25th - Monthly Guided Start Meditation for dementia carers starts

April

12th - Third carers course start will running for 5 weeks

13th - Virtual afternoon teas delivered

During the Pandemic we delivered over...

600

prescriptions for those isolated in their homes

A BIG Thank You!

To our wonderful Volunteers and Staff, the generosity of the wonderful people of Wirral and to many organisations.

Age UK - Eleanor Rathbone Trust - Johnson Foundation

LCR Cares - Martin Lewis Foundation – MIND - NHS - National Lottery

Steve Morgan Foundation - Wirral CCG - Wirral Council - Wirral Lions

Thank you all so much for your support, your skills, your commitment, your concern and care for others.

Age UK Wirral services include:



Wellbeing Services



Dementia & Carers



Mental Health Therapies



Digital Inclusion



Practical Support



Out of Hospital Support



Information & Advice



Charity Shops

0151 482 3456
ageukwirral.org.uk