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BERENICE GROVES

our Chair of the Trustees

"It has been an extremely difficult beginning to 2021 at Charlotte Straker House. We are still very busy dealing with Covid infections and we are devastated to report that we have had some resident deaths due to this dreadful virus. As you can imagine it is an extremely difficult time for residents' families and our own care team. Many of our staff members are also Covid positive, and those remaining at work have had to shoulder the burden and have been working extremely long hours.

The numbers of staff infected with Covid has meant that our receptionist, administrators, handyman, trustees and volunteers have stepped in to manage ancillary tasks such as laundry and food preparation. We are hugely grateful for the resilience and flexibility of our whole team and we want those who are too unwell to work to solely concentrate on their own recovery and to only return to work when they are fully restored to health.

We have been literally humbled by the hundreds of helpful actions, the notes of support and love and the kind gifts that we have received. The community has given us donations of food, drinks and toiletries and even free accommodation for our staff members who have been living away from their families. The overwhelming message to come from this pandemic is that our community will rise to the challenge during difficult times and will pull together to support its most vulnerable members.

The support from local businesses and the community is keeping us afloat. Thank you so much to those who have donated money, gifts, food and supplies – from the bottom of our heart, it is very much appreciated."

With much love and many thanks



Message from Pam Crawley, our Manager

We have been experiencing extreme levels of sickness at Charlotte Straker House, due to this new strain of the Covid virus.

We have been supported by an amazing set of staff, both those of us who were left standing not only our care team, but those in the kitchen, our office team (aka laundry and kitchen backup!), housekeeping team and, not forgetting our handyman Paul, who is now an expert in kitchen assistant duties.



We have tremendous support from two staff from another Corbridge care home and consistent and dedicated agency staff, alongside the never ending support from our trustees and the wider community, who continue to supply us with hot meals, handcreams, home baking and treats to name just a few gifts that have been recently dropped off. All these efforts are supporting us to care for our residents in the best way that we can.

To those of you who have been poorly, Berenice, Deb O'Neill (Clinical Lead) and I ask only that you concentrate on returning to full health. I know that our Trustees have been in regular contact with those of you who were away from work. Just remember that this is not a time for feeling any guilt at being unwell, but, instead for concentrating on your recovery, to come back to us strong and to help with what will be a hard fight over the coming weeks.

To sign off, I would wish to echo my absolute and total thanks to each and every one of you, those of you that can be with us right now are doing so without fail and without any days off... Words to reflect your support are simply not enough. Recently I shared a message on the company WhatsApp group and I wanted to repeat it here - this sentiment is perfect to reflect what I'm seeing in you all, each day - *"You are amazing and brave and strong and wonderful."* Remember that.

For those of you that can't be with us right now, we know you are with us in spirit and thought. Those very facts help us to get through each day. Know that we only want you to be safe and well and that we cannot wait to see you back to strength and with us again.

Take care and be kind to each other, 'Charlotte' will have her team back together again soon and we can draw strength from each other as we move forward.

With love

Pam
Xxx

Message from Deb O'Neill, our Clinical Lead.

I just wanted to reiterate the thanks that we all have for all of the amazing support we have had from people... the donations of hand cream have been very welcome as I for one have struggled with totally ruined nails! 😊 Also just another thank you to the staff. Despite having worked well over 100 hours in consecutive days, they always made me feel ready for another day! Everyone was still smiling, giving their best and supporting each other and the only reason that I was able to keep going...was because they did.



Charlotte Straker "Angels"

We wanted to share this story with you, to show the resilience and care of our staff team, who can now truly be called Charlotte Straker "Angels".

Trudy Jewitt, a care assistant, was diagnosed with Covid just before Christmas and after a tough recovery from the virus, returned to Charlotte Straker House after the completion of the mandatory self isolation period.

One of our residents is an avid Newcastle United supporter, and wears nothing but black and white each Sunday. Before she caught the virus, Trudy helped him choose and dress each weekend in a black and white shirt, black trousers, and even black and white underwear and socks! She asked our resident why he didn't wear a Newcastle United football top, and he told her that he had never owned one.

So, on her day off, Trudy trawled the web and found a reasonably priced Newcastle top which she paid for and wrapped as a Christmas present. She was ready to hand over the parcel, but unfortunately was diagnosed as Covid positive and had leave work. When she returned, she gave our resident the present, and he was absolutely delighted that he was now able to wear a proper Newcastle football shirt! You can see the happiness in his face in the attached photo. This is just one instance of how our care team always goes above and beyond when caring for our residents – they are treated as if they were our own family.



Trudy and our delighted resident, modelling his own Newcastle United top!

Jodie - our own holistic therapist

Jodie MacDonald is a staff member who has been kindly on loan from another local care home, and she has been recently working as a part of the team at Charlotte Straker.

Jodie is proving to be a star in so many ways; not only is she an excellent care worker, she is also a talented holistic therapist. She is taking the time to provide free of charge hand, foot and back massages to help our residents relax, and to ease sore joints and muscles. She is also carrying out massages on our hard working staff.

In such difficult times, we are amazingly thankful to Jodie, who has worked both in the role of Care Assistant and also in the role of Massage Therapist, and who will continue to provide a range of therapies to our residents and our staff through these difficult times.



Some of the quotes from our residents who have enjoyed Jodie's massages.

"My feet are much warmer now, warm and tingly feeling. I would have my feet done again next time."

"This was an unexpected pleasure. It was very calming and soothing. Time just flew past and the relief is great. Thank you."

"Very relaxing and therapeutic and with good company. It was gorgeous and I could have just gone to sleep."

Jodie with some of the essential oils that she uses for her massages.

Helping communication during lockdown

Of course all our staff are adhering to strict use of personal protective equipment.

This can bring its own difficulties for our residents in recognising key staff, when they are wearing their masks.

In order to combat this, we have provided our staff with larger name badges which show them both with and without their masks. This is working well to support our residents to feel more at ease.



Jill Urwin, Senior Care Assistant,
with her new badge.



Laura Armstrong, Care Assistant,
with her new badge.

Deep cleaning Charlotte Straker House

As a part of our response to the recent Covid-19 outbreak we are committed to taking every precaution to ensure the safety and well-being of our residents.

As part of our deep cleaning approach we asked a team from Crewe Cleaning services to provide an additional layer of "fogging" decontamination to give the best protection to residents and staff. Crewe Cleaning have been amazingly responsive in attending Charlotte Straker House and so professional in their approach to the job in hand.



The photo shows Lyndsey from Crewe Cleaning and our Manager Pam after the decontamination had been completed.

Thank you to our team!

At Charlotte Straker, there is no end to the flexible talents of staff, who have been working longer hours and have shown huge flexibility during the covid emergency. These are just a few of our heroes:

Lynsey Forster, Senior Care Assistant

Lynsey Forster is an experienced Senior Carer at Charlotte Straker House. Lynsey has been such an important part of support to Charlotte Straker through the past few difficult weeks, working tirelessly and without days off in support of each and every one of our residents and the staff team.

Clinical Lead Nurse Deborah O' Neill commented that: "Lynsey has been a huge support to me through a difficult time, where many of our exceptional staff were unable to be with us. I often had to say, Lynsey I need your help, I'm making you second in command! and Lynsey rose to the occasion in every turn."



Here, we again get to see another of Lynsey's amazing talents, in that with her qualifications and experience, she is working in our kitchen, preparing and serving nutritious and flavoursome meals to our residents. Well done Lynsey.



Our Office Team

Our office team have been working throughout the Covid pandemic and have lately been helping out with many of the ancillary tasks around the home. When we didn't have enough staff to do the laundry and help in the kitchen, they stepped up and worked extra hours, over the weekends and into the early evening to make sure that all the jobs were done.

Thank you to Karen Cadwallader, Office Manager, Alice Alexander, Receptionist, Jo Howarth, Administrator, Andrea Farrow, Administrator and our handyman Paul Wakefield.



Thank you to Pam

Our manager Pam Crawley had a lovely surprise when our staff team presented her with a hamper. They had all clubbed together to buy a wonderful collection of goodies, and had signed a card to express their thanks for her support and hard work over the recent Covid crisis at Charlotte Straker House.

As one member of staff said, "She has been here 100 percent of the time since the beginning, working incredibly long shifts and staying away from her family so that she could be on call day and night. Through the height of the outbreak, she did her best to ensure we were all coping, and gave us so much support and care – often stepping in to do shifts when staff fell ill with the virus. We are so grateful for her strength, resilience and kindness – we love her to bits!"

Pam replied "I was completely taken aback and humbled, and it's quite overwhelming that the team should take the time to think of me whilst everyone is so busy. I can't put into words how proud of each and every one of the staff I am and how very fortunate I am to lead such an amazingly committed team. Thank you to everyone – I can't wait to sample all the nice things in my hamper!"



Nacho the cat – our Charlotte Straker mascot

We have been asking our staff what has helped over the past few weeks and a few of them have mentioned the visits of Nacho the cat!

Nacho belongs to a family who live close to Charlotte Straker House and most days he wanders over for a chat with our staff members, when they manage to grab a few minutes for a break.

We are very careful not to touch him or that he doesn't get too close (as Covid can be transmitted on a pet's fur), but before lockdown and earlier in the year we enjoyed many cuddles. Having a pet definitely helps when things are tough, so we'd like to thank Nacho for his moral support and his owner for letting him visit us each day.



Please note: all pictures were taken in 2019 and very early 2020 before Covid became widespread.

Can you help?

Thank you to all those who have donated, or sent gifts so far. It means so much to us and many staff have been in tears from the amount of support they have received.

We are still working extremely hard and the situation looks like it may continue for many weeks. Therefore we'd be extremely grateful if you donate items such as:

- individual bottles of water
- individuals cans of fizzy drinks
- individually packaged sandwiches
- individually packaged chocolate bars or other items that the staff can grab as a quick snack
- home baking - cakes, traybakes, individually packaged, are always gratefully received!
- hand cream - we go through so many tubes as we are constantly cleaning and washing our hands.
- any toiletries such as face masks, bubble bath or bath bombs - many staff are working long hours so anything that helps them relax definitely helps.

Thank you - if you could leave your gifts in the "visiting pod" outside Charlotte Straker House. Please do not contact reception or go into Charlotte Straker House. If you'd like to email us to let us know that you've left something, please contact sally.urwin@charlottestraker.org.uk who will coordinate.

How to donate?

Every penny that you donate will go towards funding essential resources and equipment for our nursing and residential patients.

- You can make an on line donation by visiting <https://charlottestraker.org.uk/donate/covid-19-pandemic-isolation-unit-appeal>
- You can send a cheque in a sealed envelope, made out to "The Charlotte Straker Project" to Charlotte Straker House, Cookson Close, Corbridge, NE45 5HB. Please remember to ask for a gift aid donation form.
- Make a bank transfer to The Charlotte Straker Project. Please remember to ask for a gift aid donation form. The details to make the transfer are Lloyds Bank sort Code 77-20-12; Account No: 26235468; Ref: The Charlotte Straker Project
- We have a "Chuck your Cash for Charity" bin set up at the end of our drive, to hopefully encourage people to leave any spare change.

Thank you very much for your generosity!

Would you like to receive news updates, room vacancies or details of our fundraising events? Or do you know someone who would like to receive our newsletters, either by email or by post? Please forward your details by email to our Marketing Coordinator on sally.urwin@charlottestraker.org.uk or ring our office on 01434 633 999 (option 1) and leave a message.