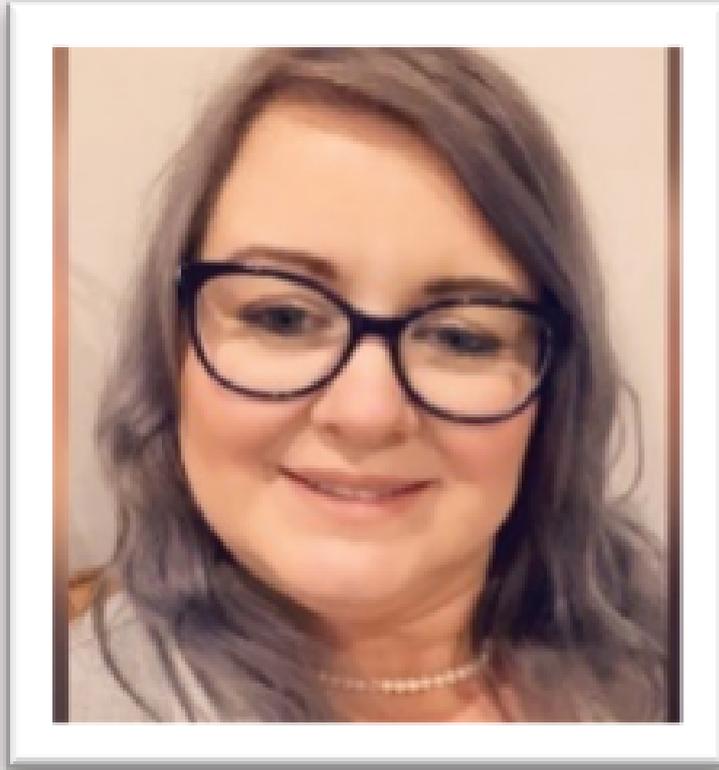


COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP IN CARE HOMES



Yvonne Manson
Abbotsford Care

I have worked in the care home sector for 24 years starting as a care assistant before qualifying as a nurse and then working in management and senior management nursing roles. I am currently the quality care and support senior manager at Abbotsford care. I believe whole heartedly in sharing the positive message of the professional and skilled people who live and work in care homes across Scotland.

I never thought in my lifetime that I would be facing a pandemic, lockdown not just of our country, but of the world, a virus that when it enters a care home can have a devastating impact. The unknown of the virus and of the situation we find ourselves in calls for compassionate leadership to guide us all through the challenges of that unknown.



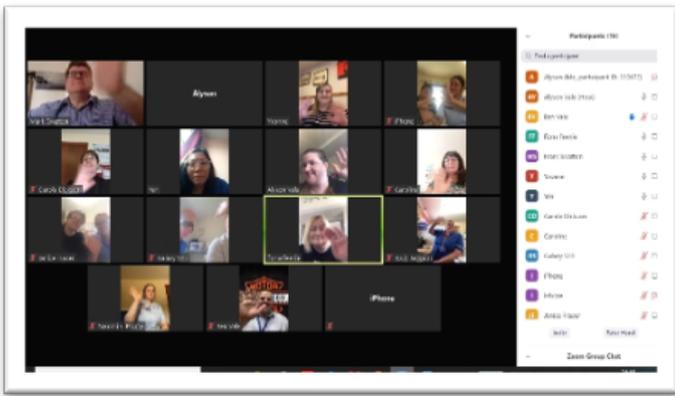
As compassionate leaders in care homes, we need to consider the impact of the pandemic on residents, staff, families, and ourselves. At the start of the pandemic the most difficult decision was to close to non-essential visitors, we did this early on after looking at the risks closing would have on wellbeing and weighing this against the risk of the virus coming into the home. We did not just close without a plan and we started regular resident/relative updates immediately, depending on the preference by post or email. Private social media groups were set up that relatives who wished to could access. We also purchased several electronic tablets so regular video calling could take place, as well as looking at how we could support entertainment and meaning in a person's day whilst adhering to social distancing and good infection control.

Stories of the devastation in care homes from across the world flooded our news screens increasing anxiety and stress for those who had relatives living in care homes, as well as those working in care homes and we worked together to put different things in place that would support people to deal with what they were seeing and hearing in the media.

Updates

We started first with **resident/relative updates** weekly, or when there was a significant change, but within the first few days we added in **manager updates and staff updates** so that everyone felt informed. These are a one-page, quick read sheet on any and all changes and these still continue to be edited and distributed on a weekly basis. To make sure we were reaching everyone and addressing all concerns or questions we added in **staff clinics**, where staff could join a virtual meeting and ask the senior managers anything.



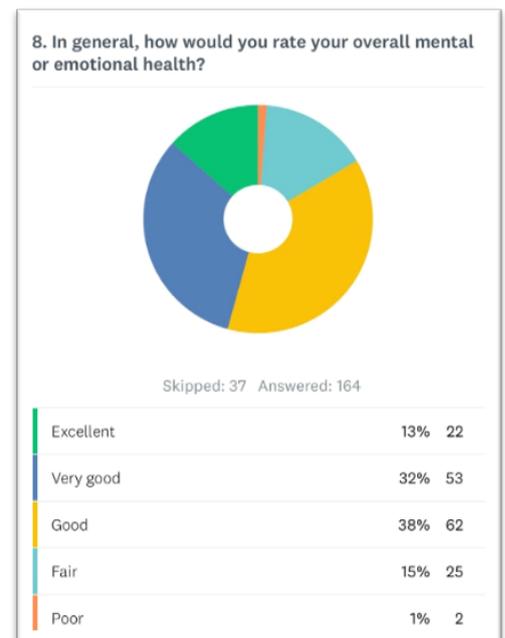


The questions we received varied from PPE, to sickness, to lots of what ifs, but throughout all these clinics that sense of family, of coming together, compassion shone through, it wasn't about titles and positions, it was about people and supporting each other. As the lockdown

continued we introduced a **relative clinic** so that any relatives could again ask senior management any questions and once more the common theme was one of togetherness, support, compassion and understanding of the impact this separation was having on us all.

As a Senior Management Team, we meet **daily virtually** to make sure we look after ourselves. When you are in the middle of a pandemic often you forget about your own wellbeing because you become focussed on supporting everyone else it is easy to forget to look after yourself. We started our own little spring into action health group where we don't discuss work but instead share the **action for happiness calendars** and complete the daily tasks from these, the one for May is called meaningful May so do have a look, you can access them here <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendars>. The calendars help you to focus on something not covid related and have fun, I have even managed to make an Irn Bru cheesecake as one of the challenges.

Our recent staff survey sent to all staff had a fantastic response rate and allowed staff to anonymously say how they felt, how they rated the support and guidance given, how their mental health was and most importantly what they were proud off and the responses almost all mentioned that family feeling, the strength of team work, and community.



INTERNATIONAL NURSES WEEK



The compassion the willingness to share and the value of all our staff across our care homes has been evident throughout. As a senior management team we thank our staff regularly but we wanted to do something else and made bags of kindness to be delivered to all staff each containing, a just for you hand cream, a lucky star, mints, a CARE badge, ppe handout, sweets and this little message printed on the front of the bags **'This is JUST FOR YOU, to thank you for your commitMINT, we know how much you CARE, and everyday we thank our LUCKY STARS you work with us'**

The news outlets focus on negative care home stories on portraying us as needing rescued by our NHS colleagues, but I see something quite different. I see a strong professional skilled staff group, leadership at all levels, caring and kindness from our staff, residents, families, and the local community, all pulling together to keep each other safe and well. We are writing and updating policies and procedures sometimes daily and coming up with new and innovative ways of making sure health and wellbeing is being maintained. I see gratitude and understanding from our NHS colleagues of the work being done in care homes, partnerships growing with local councils, public health and external partners as we ignore the unskilled care home stories and get on with working together to make sure we learn and learn quickly about what is working in this pandemic. Care home organisations are sharing together what they are creating and using in this pandemic that is working for them. We are offering in our hundreds to be involved in national groups to support the understanding of what it is really like to be working in a care home during this pandemic and although we may not be hearing back, who we are hearing from is from each other, from our residents, from our families and from our communities that love, that support, and every single one of those messages, letters, gifts makes a difference on our wellbeing.

Relationship centred care is often talked about in care homes, but this pandemic has highlighted the true value of our relationships. We rely on the relationships we have with each other, our residents, our families, our communities and external partners and it is that connectedness that brings us strength in these unknown times.



INTERNATIONAL NURSES WEEK



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INTERNATIONAL NURSES
WEEK