



InTouch

Winter 2022

The magazine for families and supporters of United Response



Making memories

A motorbiker's passion, a support worker's determination and a community's big-heartedness combine for a birthday to remember.

ALSO INSIDE

Are you a great support worker in the making?

What our new long-term plans means for you

Supported employment success stories

Be our hero



Raise money for the people we support by taking part in a challenge event in aid of United Response!

London marathon

2nd Oct

A 26.2 mile run around the landmarks of London.



Registration fee: **£50**



Sponsorship target: **£1,500** minimum

More info: bit.ly/URLondonMarathon2022

Vitality Big Half

4th Sep

Half marathon in London starting by Tower Bridge and finishing at the Cutty Sark.



Registration fee: **£15**



Sponsorship target: **£300** minimum

More info: bit.ly/URBigHalf2022

Ride London

29th May

100 mile bike ride from the centre of London into Essex and back.



Registration fee: **£20**



Sponsorship target: **£400** minimum

More info: bit.ly/URRideLondon2022



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Editorial

2021 was a truly extraordinary year.

I am immensely proud of the commitment, passion and sheer grit that colleagues across United Response have shown in supporting your family members through such challenging times; they have been amazing in their response. I know that many of you have also been hugely supportive and we are deeply grateful for your practical support and acts of kindness in our services.

We hope and believe that 2022 will bring new opportunities and welcome respite from Covid. You will see that we have launched a new Long Term Plan, which has been well received by colleagues across the organisation. We are well underway with work to bring the plan to life. This issue of In Touch is packed with stories from across the organisation of how – as the Long Term Plan puts it – we are building 'networks of support rooted in local communities'.

Two of the big challenges that we face right now are the recruitment and retention of staff, and funding for our services. You will be very aware of the staff shortages that are affecting social care across the country. At United Response, we have probably been able to manage this better than many providers, but it remains a big concern for us. We are currently recruiting to more than 200 positions.

In the autumn of 2021, trustees agreed that we should invest over £3 million of our charitable reserves in this financial year to give staff an additional pay rise. Frontline care staff have therefore received a well-deserved 10% pay increase. We now face the challenge of being able to get local funders to meet these additional costs for the coming year and beyond.

In part, making the case for this additional funding is about persuading local councillors and MPs that the care and support of people with a learning disability, autism or mental health conditions should be a bigger political priority.

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Frontline care staff have received a well-deserved 10% pay increase.

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A number of you have already been in touch with me to offer your support in writing to or meeting with local politicians. It would be really great if you and your family members would be able to do the same. Do please email me or write to me at the address below if you can help. It would be much appreciated!

All the very best for 2022.

Tim Cooper
Chief Executive

Tim.Cooper@unitedresponse.org.uk

**7th Floor, Knollys House,
17 Addiscombe Road,
Croydon, CR0 6SR**

Staff in Cornwall wanted to do something extra special for a person they support in December to mark a milestone birthday.

Derek has an acquired brain injury, which he sustained in a serious motorcycle accident when he was 20 years old. Despite this, Derek is still passionate about motorbikes – especially the older models.

His support worker, Tanya, started asking passing bikers if they knew of any local bike clubs where someone had a sidecar that Derek could ride along in. Rosemary, who is a member of a few motorcycle groups and lives nearby, heard about the idea from her friends. She got in touch and they started to plan the trip.

As Derek has some difficulties walking, they arranged to meet up a week before his birthday so

Biker's birthday celebration

he could practice getting in and out of the sidecar.

Tanya said "Derek absolutely loves motorbikes – he can tell you everything about them. When Rosemary came, he had the biggest smile on his face. You could tell that he was going to get in there no matter what!"

On the morning of his birthday, Rosemary took Derek in her sidecar to a nearby leisure centre, where 13 other bikers were ready to escort him to his celebrations!

Rosemary said "Everybody that was made aware of it wanted to join in to make it extra special, so we ended up with a small procession. It was wonderful to see the joy on Derek's face. I told him I'll do it again next year if he's up for it."

The convoy rode around Saltash, finishing at the Ashtorre Café where the bikers had arranged

for refreshments including a birthday cake shaped like a bike and sidecar. Derek's family and some of our staff were also there to join in the fun and watch him cut his cake.



People we support release charity single



In November, we released our first ever single! *Dance With You* by United in Song was written by senior support worker, Andrew Bowen, and performed by staff and people we support from across the country.

Andrew said: "Lyrically, the song was inspired by Zoom sessions we'd put on to reach out to the people we supported who suddenly had to shield and isolate during the pandemic, perhaps without understanding why. The sessions connected people with fun activities and almost always ended in us dancing!"

The music video has been played over 82,000 times and is available on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music and YouTube.

You can view the video at bit.ly/URno1

ay brated in style



Down Syndrome Bill

We want to hear your views on the Down Syndrome Bill that is going through Parliament.

The Bill says there should be a new law on making sure people with Down Syndrome get good support to live their lives. There is fantastic information available on The National Down Syndrome Policy Group website, including an Easy Read version of the Bill.

We'd like to know what you think about the Bill so we can share your views with Learning Disability England. Email us on campaigns@unitedresponse.org.uk



All ABOUT John Bizzell



This issue, we get to know John Bizzell, age 54, who has been supported by United Response for 20 years.

What has been the worst thing about the pandemic for you?

Staying at home, not able to go out alone, not going to Costa coffee daily or do my job cleaning the office. No day trips, shopping...I missed doing all of this on my own.

Who is your favourite person to spend time with and why?

Susana - she is a pleasure to be with and she is my key worker.

What makes you happy?

Having wine at the weekend and going out to Costa Coffee.

What makes you angry?

Covid 19, crime solving, fights when I feel ignored.

Who is your favourite celebrity?

Jean from *Emmerdale*, because she makes me laugh.

What is your favourite food?

Egg and chips and biscuits.



What is your favourite TV show?

Midsomer Murders. I like most crime shows.

What is your proudest achievement?

I saved money for five years to buy my summer house. I also get to have a big bottle of wine weekly, because I work hard to save for it.

What do you think makes good support?

Staff supporting me with my day-to-day activities and listening to me when I need to talk.

I have a rose in my mother's memory. In 2020 it bloomed 11 times. I think she is happy with me.

What do you think makes bad support?

Not being listened to when I need to talk as I get very anxious when changes happen and need answers.

What is your happiest memory?

When I lived with my mother, Betty Mary. I have a rose in her memory which I look after. In 2020 it bloomed 11 times. I think she is happy with me when the rose blooms.

Where would you most like to go on holiday and why?

Bognor Regis because it is near home and I don't like to be away from home too long.

What do you find hard that you'd like to get better at?

Honesty. Sometimes I lie because I think I will get in trouble if I say the truth.

How do your support staff make a difference to your life?

My life has structure with support staff. Beach Road staff are amazing.

Supported employment success stories

Manchester

Our Manchester Supported Employment team has been working with Loreto College to find work experience placements for students with learning disabilities and autism around the city. Nafisa, Diogo and Zack spent six weeks working in businesses across the city...



Nafisa, The YHA

Nafisa is 20 and lives in Chorlton with her family. She wants to work in a café in the future so she was supported to find a placement as kitchen staff at a Manchester hostel run by the Youth Hostel Association (YHA).

Reception Manager Amy worked with Nafisa on a training plan so she was able to cater her work experience placement to her interests.

As well as helping with food prep, Nafisa also completed some barista training which she hopes to use in a future role.

She said: "My favourite part of the job was making the hot chocolates!"

YHA Manchester Deputy Manager Chris Gilliver said: "The YHA's main charitable aim is to enhance the lives of all young people.

"Providing volunteers like Nafisa the opportunity to learn work skills fits that aim perfectly. I always find that having volunteers around improves overall staff morale, especially when they're as warm and positive as Nafisa."

He added: "There should be jobs for everyone who wants to work. Employees like Nafisa have a lot to give to any workplace, and I do not see why they cannot become a core part of any workforce."



Diogo, The Bread and Butter Thing

Diogo is 21 and lives in Timperly with his parents. He has been studying at Loreto College for two years now. In his spare time, he likes looking on Google and watching videos on YouTube. Diogo's work placement was at The Bread and Butter Thing – a charity that redistributes surplus food and other household items to people on low incomes.

During his placement, Diogo made up food packages that were going out to the local community. He also stacked crates and helped to maintain the warehouse.

Diogo said: "Work experience is good. I learnt on the job and I was really good at helping Ben."

Zack, Potion Café at Afflecks

“

Zack will be an asset to any future employer - we know it.

”

Zack is 20 and has also been studying at Loreto for two years. He lives in an annex in his family home in Sale.

His work placement was at Potion – a quirky sustainable café run by self-identified witch, Lauren! The café is based on the third floor of Affleck’s indoor market.



Zack was a bit nervous about his placement at first, but he quickly settled in. He took customers’ orders, ordered stock and even did some taste testing to decide on the Christmas special hot chocolate!

Zack said: “Helping Alisha was the best thing ever – she was very patient.”

His message to someone starting work experience is: “Don’t worry, you will have help!”

Lauren said: “It’s been an absolute honour and privilege to provide Zack with a safe and supportive environment to learn life skills and hopefully join the world of work.

“We’ve made sure that Zack has learned lots of different skills and he’ll be an asset to any future employer - we know it.”

South West

Lauren creates her own children’s colouring book

Lauren is in her 20s and joined us here at United Response Supported Employment in September 2020. The programme encourages and supports young people with additional needs to build confidence and skills within a working environment. Lauren was referred to this programme by the college and Career South West.

Lauren has an EHCP and specific needs with regards to her health.

Lauren was quite shy when she first came to us and she has gone from strength-to-strength since then. She is much more confident and vocal in the group and has taken on the challenge of starting a work placement at a local children’s nursery. The nursery have given very positive feedback about Lauren and are really enjoying having her there; the children love interacting with Lauren.

Lauren is very creative and has been decorating the walls of the classroom with her designs. The inspiration for her colouring books came from these and her love of working with children. Her long-term goal is to work with young children with additional needs in a nursery or primary setting. The nursery Lauren works at have a few copies of the book and the children are working through them. Lauren wanted the books to be educational as well as fun, so they incorporate early years numeracy and colours.

“Drawing makes me feel calm and happy,” says Lauren, “Having a work placement makes me happy because it gives me a taster of the type of job I would maybe like to do in the future. It is also nice to have a bit of variety and be gaining experience.”



Meet Alison, Head of Healthcare

Staff profile

Please introduce yourself. How long have you been working for United Response and what you were doing before that?

Hello, my name is Alison Worsfold and I joined in February last year as Head of Healthcare. I have been a Registered Nurse for 30 years and spent many years working with GPs and latterly in a large mental health trust as their Physical Health Lead Nurse. This involved developing training on physical health conditions, with a focus on reducing health inequalities and raising awareness on the links between physical and mental health. In the last five years my role in social care has given me deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges within this sector.

What is your role and what responsibilities does that entail?

My working week is really varied and one of my main responsibilities is to support frontline staff, managers and the directors team with anything healthcare related. I also support on matters of health advocacy for the people we support and provide advice to enable people to access appropriate healthcare. I design and deliver training on a range of healthcare topics and work with services to improve their healthcare support and support plans. I also work with other voluntary organisations to collaborate on health-related national priorities.

Why did you join United Response?

My youngest son has a learning disability and autism. When I saw the job description for the role, I felt it would enable me to combine my lived experience, my professional skills and my drive and passion to make a difference. I also wanted to work for a charity that recognises the need to focus on healthcare and reducing inequalities and felt that United Response's values reflected my own.

So how does having a family member with a learning disability and autism influence your work?

Being a parent influences my role daily. It keeps me grounded and focussed on what's important in making a difference to the

“My youngest son has a learning disability and autism...being a parent influences my role daily.”





Above: Alison and her son.



Nothing about us, without us

Co-production happens when people with lived experience and their families have equal input in the planning and delivery of services. This is often summed up as ‘nothing about us, without us’.

To achieve success with our Long Term Plan, we want to create more co-production opportunities to help inform the decisions we make about the organisation.

We’d also like to create forums so you can have your say and play an active part in our campaigning to improve the social care sector.

- Continue to embed our Quality Checkers
- Establish forums for people we support and families
- Build channels for you to be involved in our governance
- Seek your views to shape our organisational plans
- Create ways for you to shape the debate on social care.

We’re looking for people who would like to help us shape this work and kick start our early discussions. If you would like to express your interest, please get in touch by emailing sandra.easdon@uniteresponse.org.uk.

lives of the people we support. My son is 26 years old and we’ve experienced first-hand both excellent and poor healthcare support. I understand how difficult it can be to navigate the system and that it can feel like a constant battle to have a voice and be listened to, especially regarding health concerns.

What are your plans in the role for the next six months?

Since joining, I have developed a 5 year healthcare strategy and in 2022 will be continuing to work on the priorities within it. This will involve working with areas to look at the health needs of the people we support and identify any areas that need additional action or support. I will also be continuing to undertake learning on a variety of pertinent topics to raise confidence in our staff teams, as well as develop further training, policy, guidance and resources.

Why is healthcare such a priority for people we support and their families?

People with a learning disability want to live healthy, long lives and achieve their own fulfilling life goals. This seems so basic and would be assumed for the rest of UK population, yet there is so much work still to do nationally to make sure that everyone has the right support to achieve this. Sadly we know that health inequalities continue to exist and that people with a learning disability die on average over 20 years younger than the wider population. So it’s important we focus on this area and ensure we are working to support reducing health inequalities.



Shaped by People

We have published a new Long Term Plan which sets out our vision and priorities, continuing the golden thread of person-centred support that has always defined United Response.

Good health and a new focus on co-production, as outlined on this page, are important ambitions in this new Long Term Plan, which you can read in full at www.unitedresponse.org.uk/LTP



Outside, inside: the father turned support worker

Inspired by the support his step-daughter received, Tony Smith joined United Response in the '90s and has held roles with us ever since. He offers a unique perspective on social care, as both a family member and support worker of people with learning disabilities.

When work as a part-time sports coach and small business owner came to an end in the early '90s, circumstances demanded that Tony explore new things. It was Tony's step-daughter Tracy, now supported by United Response for almost 30 years, who first inspired Tony to consider a career in support work.

"If I'm honest, it was very much a case of 'suck it and see' after I saw an advert for support work. The obvious connection to my every day family life

initially caught my eye, but I didn't anticipate how much experience I already had that I could bring to the table from day one."

A career in care

Tony began working with people with learning disabilities in 1993 and shortly thereafter began as a support worker in a North Wiltshire United Response residential home. Over the years, Tony has made full use of the flexible contract options open to support workers; he worked relief hours while studying for social work qualifications, returned to full-time and later on switched to part-time hours to balance support work with office-based employment.

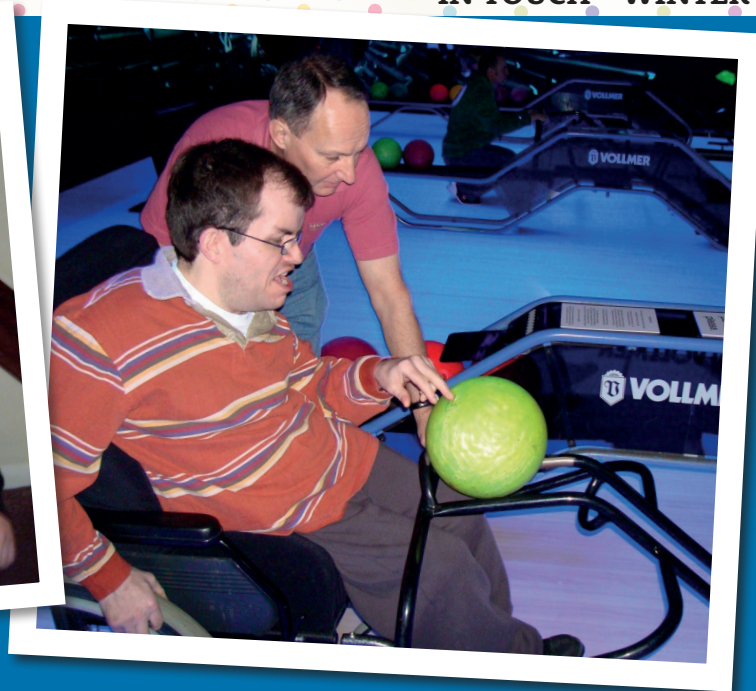
He has also taken on area- and service-manager roles with United Response, but has always found himself drawn back to what first attracted him to the sector – providing day-to-day support to enrich people's lives.

"Put simply, support work is understanding how a person can thrive and then doing all you can to help them to achieve it. The specifics of the support

Happy memories:

Tony enjoying a day out at the Battle Proms with David, a person he supports, and Sue Bole from his support team.





Left: David, who Tony supports, has got to know Tony's step-daughter Tracy well over the years. **Right:** David and Tony enjoying a game of bowling.

will of course vary for each person, but the goal is always to enable them to have a full life, and achieve as much as they possibly can".

"It's not all a bed of roses. But I'm lucky to have had some fantastic experiences along the way that just wouldn't have happened in any other career. I distinctly remember going to a studio production of 'Deal or No Deal' with a person I supported at the time, as well as trips to international-level sport, music events and holidays. Seeing people we support and colleagues develop and achieve is also a real attraction."

The family connection

Tony feels that experiencing the ups and downs as a parent of someone with a learning disability set him up well for his professional role.

"By the time any child reaches adulthood, their family will inevitably have spent lots of time advocating on their behalf – and this is all the more true for the parents of people with learning disabilities, autism or mental health needs. You'll be well aware of the structures and systems in play and how to be tenacious in getting the right results for your child's wellbeing. Being that best-interest advocate is part of the support worker role too."

"Having a first-hand understanding of what it feels like to have someone you love being supported by

others has really helped me too. Frankly, the feelings attached to that shift in responsibility and the changes that relationships go through are complex for families to navigate. I hope that being an outsider on the inside has helped me support others through it."

"What have you got to lose?"

Tony would love to see more parents and families use their experience and empathy to enter the professional sector with a running start.

"The team you will be working with will have a wealth of knowledge you can lean on, but you'll also be encouraged to question how and why things are done. This could benefit you, the people you work with and the people being supported."

"The training the sector receives now, especially around positive behavior support, is vastly improved compared to when my career began. And a role as a support worker can give valuable experience and transferrable skills that will open up a wealth of opportunities if you want that."

"I get real pleasure from supporting people to explore their passions and see where it takes them. If you're ready for a career change, or think you could fit something round your other commitments, why not give it a try? What have you got to lose?"

The care sector is facing a skills shortage across the country. If you think a career in support work could work for you, please chat to your service manager or visit www.unitedresponse.org.uk/jobs to search for vacancies.



“Remember me
as the seeds *grow*”
– in memory of Dorothy Tappenden

"Plant some seeds and every time you look at them, remember me".

These were the words that Dorothy Tappenden left for her son Robert after she passed away, asking him to remember her by planting seeds and watching them grow and blossom into mature plants.

Robert has learning disabilities and has been supported by United Response in West Sussex for over 40 years.

Dorothy's focus throughout Robert's life was to make sure that he was happy, safe and cared for. She and husband Tom dedicated their life to ensuring that Robert and others with disabilities received the support to make this a reality.

Robert's sister Jane tells us that as a child, her parents were always organising jumble sales and other events to raise awareness and funding to ensure that Robert and others with learning disabilities and the families got the support they needed. Robert's dad Tom was the outgoing, energetic, entertaining face of the events. Dorothy was the quiet organiser in the background, making sure that everything went according to plan.

Dorothy and Tom ran the Gateway Club in Crawley to help people with disabilities. They were supported in this by young people who came along to help in support of their Duke of Edinburgh award. These young people left a touching message for Dorothy and Tom in 2002 when they retired and moved away.

"In May 1996, we all descended upon the Gateway Club in order to do a service for our Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. "Admittedly we were all a bit scared about

what was to greet us. Little did we expect that we would still be there 5 years on.

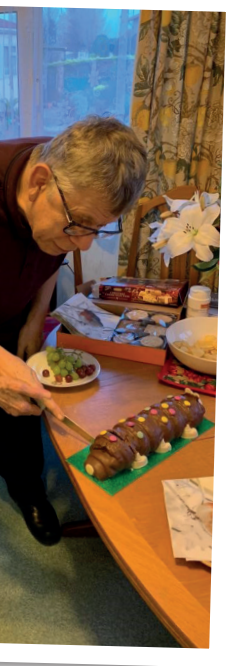
"Throughout the years we have had a great time, with fond memories of shows, karaoke and discos that we have had. Instead of feeling like outsiders, we were made to feel at home and Monday nights became as much about having fun as something we had to do. That is why we are all still here today!

"You will be fondly remembered and always spoken of as a unique pair, willing to give so much to so many."

Throughout the time that we have been supporting Robert, Dorothy knew that United Response's support helped to ensure that Robert was safe, happy, and with friends – aspirations that we all have for our lives.

In addition to the plants that Robert is growing and watering every day, Dorothy's legacy also lives on through a generous gift in her will to United Response. By leaving this gift, Dorothy ensured that her fight to ensure people like Robert receive the support they need to be happy and healthy will continue long into the future.

Dorothy felt her most precious gift in life, her son Robert, was best cared for by United Response, which was why she chose to leave a legacy to the organisation that has cared for her son for over 40 years. Her legacy lives on in her family, the memories they have of her and in United Response too.



Help us sow more seeds for the future for people like Robert

Dorothy is not alone in wishing to care for people with disabilities. To find out how you could leave a gift in your will, please visit www.unitedresponse.org.uk/giftsinwills or contact Darren, our Fundraising Manager, on 07585 882 300.

In the midst of all of the doom and gloom of the past two years, trying to find joy and peace in the simple things has been hard. With the January blues biting at our heels, and Covid's oppressive presence still making itself known, we started to reflect on the different techniques we use to take us back to our happy place when times are tough.

We asked some of our staff and people we support to send us snapshots of what makes them happy and were reminded that no matter how overwhelming life may feel, there are always little things to be thankful for – we just have to know where to look for them. Let the happy vibes commence...



Finding our



Ali:

"I want to be strong," Ali says as he lifts his 4th set of weights.

In lockdown, Ali was unable to go to his happy place: the gym. However, this has not stopped him from working out at home.

"Ali loves going to the gym and using all sorts of different equipment," says his support worker, "If he isn't training his muscles with free weights, he's running 10KM on his running machine."



Fran:

"Walks make me happy as they cheer me up and I can share my problems with Julia, who comes with me."

Josh:

"I can be whoever I want when playing my PlayStation."

Whether it's a Viking raiding villages or an army general fighting a historical battle, Josh can get lost in the world of gaming. Josh has been playing video games for most of his life and thoroughly enjoys completing challenges. His gaming record is very impressive and his console holds various gaming achievements. It has helped him develop relationships with others through their love of gaming.

Alex

"Being outside makes me happy"

Alex has been gardening for over 10 years and has previously been employed at Hampton Court. In this role he helped maintain the royal palace gardens in which Henry VIII use to reside. He has completed a number of courses in gardening and uses these skills to share his knowledge with others. Alex plans to grow vegetables and flowers in his garden so that he can cook dinner with his own produce.

Alex feels that the fresh air and bird calls helped him stay focused and happy.



happy place

Eileen:

"Baking makes me happy because it's what I used to do with my mum."

We liked to make sausage rolls and apple or strawberry pie. Mum was canny and I loved her – it was a happy time. Baking has kept me busy while all of my clubs are closed."



Becky:

"It makes me happy to see my friend Chris, who I didn't get to see much in lockdowns."



Dorothy:

"Celebrating my 40th birthday made me happy."

I had a lovely day and enjoyed myself. I hope in the future I will have a big celebration party for everyone."

There's no place like home



In 2012, United Response changed its strapline to ‘Support that changes with you’. We changed it because we wanted people to know that however their life changed and whatever new challenges they faced, we would always be there – with a cuppa and a biscuit and a spanking new plan of action. Of course, some change can be exciting: first jobs, moving home, new relationships. But some can be slightly scarier: and that’s when our commitment to those words matters most.

Our team at Stanley Avenue in Haxby, York, really rose to the challenge of bringing our strapline to life, when one of the three women they supported - 79-year-old Liz – suffered a sudden stroke, one worrying night back in April 2019. As life for Liz turned upside down, her support team went above and beyond to help her adapt to a different way of life, including fighting fiercely for her right to stay in the home she’d lived in happily for the past ten years. Here, service manager Anna Mulligan and keyworker, Wendy Stead, tell us how their dedication to flexible support has helped lucky Liz embrace her new life, and continue to be supported by the people who know her best.

“I’ll always remember the night of Liz’s stroke,” says support worker Wendy, “I’d just helped her get to bed and had gone back to the sleep-in room when I heard her calling out my name repeatedly. I sped back to check on her and found

her slumped slightly to one side – she didn’t look right at all. When I asked her to try and sit up and she couldn’t, I knew immediately something was very wrong and called an ambulance. I went with her to the hospital and tried to keep her calm as they ran loads of tests – I could tell she was very confused about why her voice was slurring and she couldn’t move her arm or communicate properly.”

Liz was officially diagnosed as having suffered a stroke and stayed in the hospital for 11 weeks. When she was finally allowed to return home, it was clear that the way she was used to being supported was going to have to change significantly. She’d lost the use of her right arm, couldn’t walk and now needed help drinking, eating and with personal care. The service manager at the time, Emma Bailey, applied for more funding so they could increase the level of support for Liz, but frustratingly, they weren’t

given enough. As Liz's social worker started pushing for her to move out of Stanley Avenue and into a care home, the team knew they had to act quickly and advocate for Liz in her temporarily weakened state.

"We all knew that Liz wouldn't want to go into a care home," says Anna, "She was settled at Stanley Avenue - she knew all of the staff and got on with her housemates. Her sister, Kathryn, was in total agreement so we did what we needed to do: we outsourced the extra support she needed and we set off on a mission to prove we could give her what she needed to get her quality of life back - at home, with us."

Having a united team around her who knew her personality and quirks meant Liz could be encouraged to adjust to the more physical sides of her new support plan in unique and creative ways. One of the biggest obstacles they needed to overcome was Liz's anxiety. Before her stroke, she had suffered with Generalised Anxiety Disorder for many years and needed regular medication to steady her nerves. The new sensation of being manually handled by two members of staff when it came to getting in and out of her bed and with personal care became a new trigger for Liz. But luckily, Wendy's keen observations, combined with her deep understanding of what made Liz tick, led to the team learning some new and unusual approaches to give Liz more control over the new routines.

"I noticed that when Liz got anxious with the manual handling, she'd repeatedly ask us what was happening," says Wendy, "We'd tell her, and then she would almost get stuck in her head repeating our words back to us over and over. So we got together, and decided to change things up. The next time she got stressed out and asked us what was happening, we replied by asking her to tell us. The role reversal seemed to give her a better sense of control over what was happening, and soon she was able to lead us through every step, with a lot of very positive encouragement every time she got it right. We also found we could motivate her to do the things we needed - roll over to one side, for example - by incorporating two of her most cherished belongings: her life-sized cut-out of Jon Bon Jovi and her framed picture of Frankie Detorri!

“She would never have progressed this much had she been left in a home

Kathryn, sister

We'd shout "Turn towards Bon for us, Liz!" and she'd happily oblige, and then "Wave to Frankie now!" and so on. We realised we were turning a corner."

The team maintained a positive attitude and upbeat tone of voice when talking to Liz, which motivated her to do more things for herself. Over time, she started getting used to using her left arm instead of her right and eventually she was able to return to her love of knitting, using a special knitting machine the team had sourced that they could help thread. The team knew Liz's love of rock music and introduced band sessions. Playing instruments such as piano, the guitar, and drums was a great way to motivate Liz to use both hands and build her control and dexterity in a way that was fun and rewarding. She began contributing to mealtimes as staff used hand-over-hand techniques to help her chop and stir, and helped washing up the dishes. Little-by-little, the everyday activities she used to do were brought back into her daily routine.

Liz has accepted she won't be able to walk again, and ironically, using a wheelchair has solved the biggest trigger for her anxiety, pre-stroke: her fear of going outside and tripping or falling over.

"Liz's anxiety used to stop her from enjoying so many experiences out of the house," says Wendy, "She was terrified of slipping on a pebbly surface and most times she left the house she needed to be medicated. Once, she literally froze in fear on the way out of a café and blocked everyone else inside for hours, too distressed to move. It was so upsetting. We'd bought her a wheelchair before the stroke to help, but her new one is much fancier and she absolutely loves going out in it. She tries new things now and hasn't needed her medication to go out for over a year now, which is amazing."

Life for Liz has now returned to something close to what she had before and she happily sits down to do her jigsaw puzzles, chat with housemates and enjoy her love of music and singing. As she goes up to bed at night, she raises her left hand to her face and blows goodnight kisses to all of her housemates - a sign of how far she's come physically, and how happy she is to be where she's loved and understood.

Her sister, Kathryn, believes Liz's life would be completely different had she been moved into a care home as her social worker had wanted.

"She would never have progressed this much had she been left in a home," she says, "Before she was supported by United Response, she'd been in a place where everything was done for her and she was very dependent - everyone ate together, went out together...a care home would have been a step back to that way of life. I am so grateful to Anna, Wendy and everyone at Stanley Avenue for how hard they worked to keep her in her home."

And we're sure Liz is too!

Getting better through Behaviour Support: u

At the end of 2019 we shared news of our progress in improving support for people whose behaviour can be challenging.

You may remember the story of Anna Mulligan, our coach in York, who helped her colleagues get better at using Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) so they could help a young man get the sort of life he wanted. We now have more than a dozen PBS coaches spread over many parts of the country and they are having a real impact, as these quotes from their colleagues show:

“He has helped increase staff knowledge about PBS, and observes and guides them on shift when required.”

“She has been fantastic – she shares her wealth of knowledge, and the strategies she suggests are well thought-out and realistic. We really value her in her role.”

One of the early signs that PBS coaches are making a difference is in the reduction in the number of “restrictive interventions” we use when supporting people. These restrictive interventions are things we do, like restraint or calming medication, to stop a small number of people harming themselves or others, when the risks are so high that there seems to be no alternative.

PBS Coaches, together with the PBS co-ordinator, Marie Cresswell, and three regional PBS leads, have put a lot of effort into working with teams that are using restrictive interventions. Very often, with the right guidance about how to use PBS, these teams can find ways to support people better so that the risks are reduced and

they no longer need to use the restrictive interventions. In just the last year for example, we’ve reduced the number we use by 30% – that’s nine people who no longer need to have a restrictive intervention in their support plan at all.

PBS coaches have worked particularly hard on reducing the amount physical intervention (restraint) used by our staff. More often than not, this is an approach that’s been part of the person’s support package from before we’ve met them and we’re often told it’s the only way to work with them safely. Marie is clear that when coaches help staff develop better PBS, they can improve their support so that they no longer need to use physical interventions.

“She is knowledgeable and passionate about PBS and this has meant real and meaningful day-to-day changes for people we support.”

h Positive pdate

Recently she was able to report a 40% reduction in the number in place across the organisation.

“The key is that local resource,” she says. “When they have someone close by with the skills and knowledge in PBS to help them, staff teams can readily improve a person’s life so that they don’t need any physical intervention in their planned support. And even if we can’t stop using a particular physical intervention for the time being, coaches will work with teams to make sure they’ve got enough alternatives to use it only as a very last resort – which then means it is used less often.”

Marie has also improved our PBS policy, making it much clearer to everyone what their responsibilities are. Policies may sound like they’re not important,

but when they’re good they are really useful to staff because they help them understand what they should do – and when we’re supporting people whose behaviour is challenging that can be vital. Marie has also improved PBS training for staff and found ways to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need, even in these difficult times.

In the first few months of this new year we’ll be recruiting another twenty coaches from within our workforce so that staff everywhere in the organisation will be able to access local help and expertise. The expertise they contribute doesn’t just help people who we support using restrictive interventions (though they’ve been a priority) but everyone who at times struggles to get the most out of life.



Practice Development

Recovering from the pandemic

As you’ll expect, our staff have been working hard to help people recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and we’re determined to learn what we can about good support from the last 2 years.



For example, we discovered in lockdown that some people really benefitted from the slower, more patient support we could provide when we didn’t have the fixed external deadlines of appointments and fixed external activities to work to. Slow, calm and quiet support is good support – we got better at it in lockdown and can maintain much of it as restrictions ease.

Also, because testing and vaccinations were so important, we put extra efforts into helping some people get over their fears of needles or medical procedures, and developed new strategies which we’re going to be able to use to help people have healthier futures.

And when lockdowns ended last July, many of our teams took the opportunity to rethink people’s lives with them. Some people decided not to return to exactly the same lifestyle they had before. Better futures coming from a difficult time.

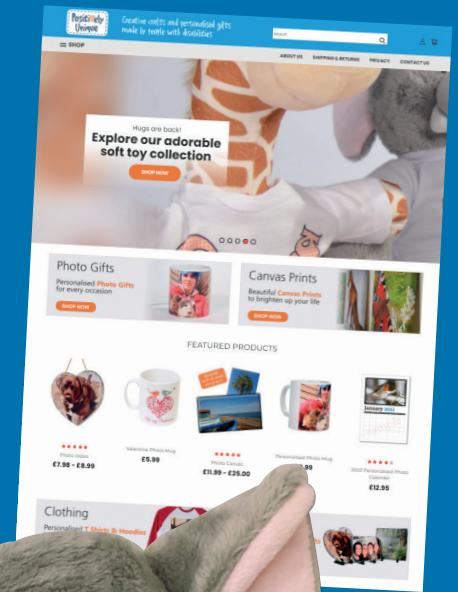
GOOD TO KNOW

People we support launch online shop!

Positively Unique is our new online shop which sells a range of personalised gifts and creative crafts made by people supported by United Response.

Visit our online shop to turn your family photos into stunning personalised gifts, printed onto canvas, mugs, slates, T-shirts, hoodies, super cute soft toys, and much more!

It's quick and easy to upload your photos and create your perfect design using our website.



Browse the full product range and place your order at www.positively-unique.co.uk



Your feedback matters

United Response encourages feedback on everything we do, and we are always trying to improve the way we do things. If you have a comment, concern or complaint, you can tell us in the following ways:

- a one-to-one meeting/phone call with a staff member of your choice
- to the Chief Executive of United Response
- to your local Social Services, Health Authority, Local Government Ombudsman
- to the Care Quality Commission
- to the Supporting People Administrative Authority

And remember, you can always call our Head Office on 0208 016 5678 or our Chief Executive Hotline on 0208 016 5673.