

Coronavirus at FitzRoy

– the first 100 days

The FitzRoy picture



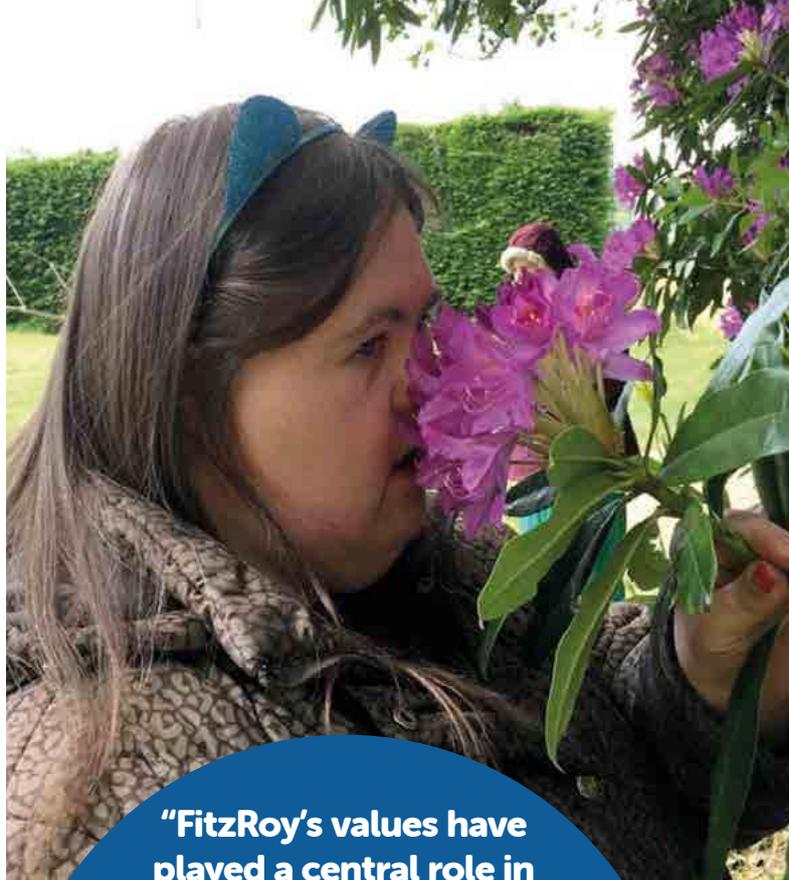
Over 100 days:



Introduction

There is no doubt that coronavirus is a crisis for the social care sector. At FitzRoy we support some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society, and as soon as it became clear that coronavirus was becoming a global threat spreading person to person with a very high infection rate, we knew that we needed to prepare.

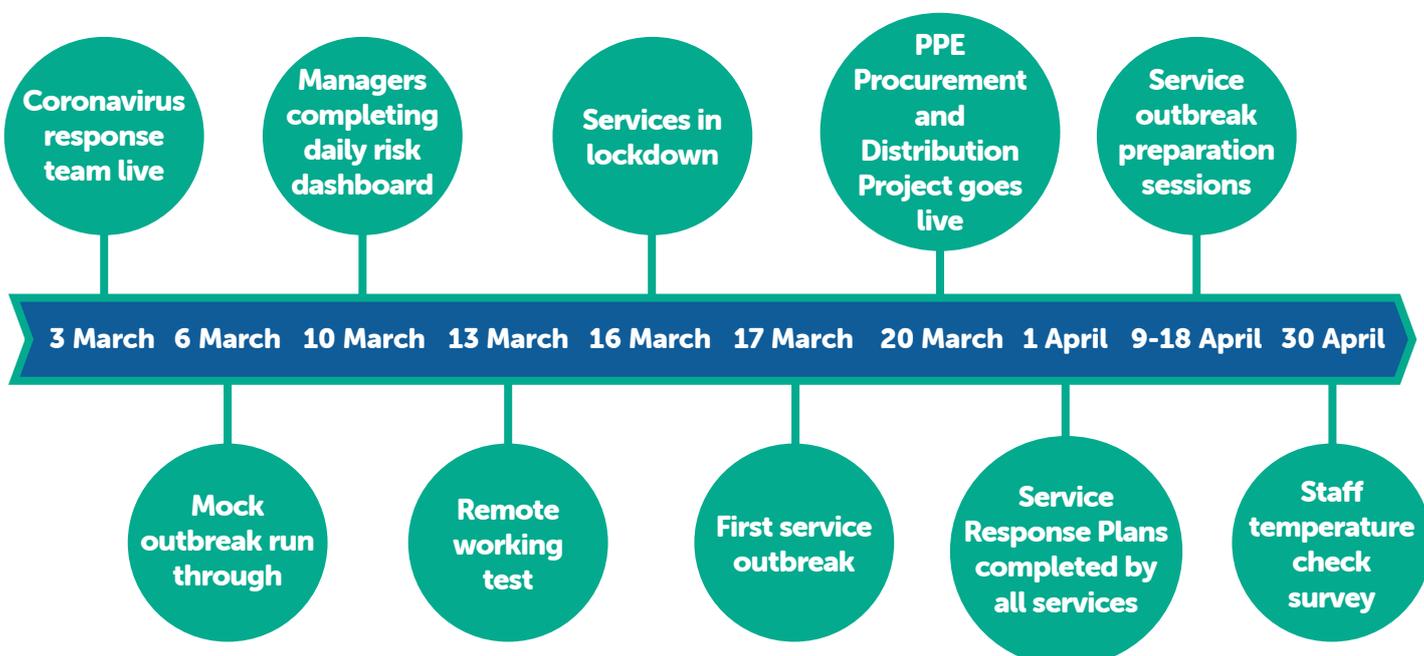
We took decisive action early on to protect the people who use our services and our staff, and now, more than three months on, we wanted to reflect on our responses – to recognise the hard work of our support staff, to identify any learning, and also to remind ourselves of the actions taken during a period of intense crisis so that we can build a culture of resilience and innovation in all we do as we move forward.



"FitzRoy's values have played a central role in how our staff have responded to this crisis. It is those values, illustrated in the remarkable stories where staff have sacrificed so much to protect the people they support, that have made a fundamental difference. I am enormously proud of them."

Martin, Chair of Trustees

Key dates



Preparation is key

Decision-making and clear lines of communication

Once there were confirmed cases of coronavirus in the UK, government guidance went very quickly from being non-existent to updating several times a day.

We knew we needed to reduce anxiety and misinformation. Staff were worried about their own health as well as the health and safety of their loved ones and the people we support. To enable us to be responsive to the threat and impact of coronavirus, by early March we had set up a clear communications and decision-making process. A key element of this was a cross departmental Coronavirus Response team meeting daily via Microsoft Teams to:

- Assess and interpret the impact of the latest government guidance.
- Review live data captured daily by each FitzRoy service.
- Elevate decisions to our Executive team, who also met daily so actions could be immediately implemented.
- Initiate our business continuity plans and ensure continuation of safe services.

Systems and insight:

We did everything we could to prepare the organisation for an outbreak, including:

- **Testing our processes and systems**, identifying gaps and areas of risk. We completed a mock outbreak in our Nottingham care home and executed a successful mock emergency shut down of our head office and implemented remote working protocols.
- **Gathering data from every service**, so we could identify and assess risks to staffing levels, and the vulnerability of staff and the people we support in terms of underlying health conditions.

Prevention:

We knew that due to the nature of the people we support at FitzRoy, once coronavirus got into our services, it would very easily spread. We implemented stringent hygiene measures, restricted visits to our services and gave clear guidance to staff and families.



We identified PPE procurement as a priority in early March. Sourcing hand sanitiser proved incredibly difficult for our services, and the fragility of PPE stocks available from Public Health England in the early weeks led to us deciding to organise this centrally. We committed to buying whatever PPE we needed to keep our staff and the people we support safe. A staff member was deployed as a dedicated PPE project manager, in charge of sourcing and distribution. This enabled us to get PPE deliveries to most of our services quickly and efficiently.



“On a weekly basis I take a van full of stock and drive to meet my regional colleagues and drop off the stock, which they then distribute.”

David, PPE project manager



17 March – our first outbreak

By this point, the anxiety across the organisation – and the sector - was palpable. We had staff self-isolating due to symptoms, and we had two confirmed cases of people we support who had caught the virus during a hospital stay. Sadly, one of those people died of coronavirus while in hospital.

Several staff moved into services to protect the people we support. Our first outbreak came with our Stockport supported living service, where two staff and two residents all tested positive. This outbreak was managed within the service, with staff working extra shifts to cover for their colleagues who were self-isolating, and isolating the residents who had tested positive.

Sam, service manager said: **“The staff have been brilliant all through this, it’s a scary time for everyone but they have just come through it stronger.”**

Dealing with a marathon not a sprint

As the huge impact of coronavirus became clearer, we rapidly improved and embedded new systems and ways of working to enable us to maintain our focus and critical oversight of service updates daily.

Managers have the knowledge and confidence to manage an outbreak:

A key role for the Coronavirus Response team was to capture, review and process the guidance produced by the government, Public Health England and our local authority partners, incorporating updates into practice guidelines and training, as well as easy read and social stories for people we support and information for families. As cases in care homes started making the news, the anxiety levels across our services were rising. We knew it could be one of our services in the news at any time. We just didn't know how badly we would be affected and when. We did our utmost to reassure staff by providing clear guidance around:

- Infection control and outbreak management
- Service visit protocols
- PPE, doffing, donning, change of clothing, shift breaks
- Social distancing in the community
- Testing and isolation guidance

Early on we adopted clear communications channels to our operational management and staff. This was essential to ensure that managers were getting the right information, at the right time, and not bombarded with information from multiple sources.

We delivered bespoke training sessions to all our service managers and deputies, increasing their confidence in the actions they would need to take in the event of an outbreak at their service.

Each of our services has developed an infection prevention and management plan based on their specific service, accommodation type and the assessed health and behavioural risks of the people they support.

Information at a glance

Capturing and assessing our data has played a vital role in our response, enabling responsive decision making, rapid development of guidance and policy, monitoring of outbreaks and PPE provision ensuring we stay fully connected as an organisation during the crisis.

The FitzRoy digital transformation team developed a Coronavirus Response Dashboard using Microsoft Power Bi. This proved an essential tool, delivering line-of-site to the Coronavirus Response team and regional managers to key risk areas. Managers complete the dashboard daily:

- Staffing level risk, sickness, furlough, high risk shielded groups
- Covid-19 infections (suspected and confirmed in people we support and staff)
- PPE stock levels in services
- People we support and staff at risk cohorts

These online data systems were a gamechanger for us, providing valuable insight to help us understand, manage and respond to the impact of coronavirus across our organisation.

PPE Stock by location



The impact of lockdown:

FitzRoy was in a strong position to enable staff to work from home as we had already rolled out the use of Microsoft Teams several months previously. This enabled us to quickly establish our mobilisation and communication methods. Managers have fully embraced this new way of working.



Thanks to our mock emergency head office shut down, we knew all non-frontline staff could successfully work from home, with access to all the systems they needed.

Lockdown has been challenging for many of the people we support. Our staff have worked hard to mitigate the changes to routines, cancellation of activities as well as the physical separation from loved ones. However positive changes and new opportunities have also been created during this time.

Lockdown and the closure of community-based activities has given staff in our services more time to provide active one to one support, to work creatively to establish new routines and interests, developing relationships and encouraging richer levels of engagement. This has also led to a significant reduction in challenging behaviour.

Vickie Howes, deputy manager said: **“Craig goes to McDonald’s every Tuesday lunchtime. Their routine is so important to them, so when it was announced that McDonald’s were closing we went to our local McDonald’s and explained our situation. They gave us cups, burger boxes, chip cartons - everything! We had to go to quite a few different supermarkets to find frozen chips, burgers and buns and then on the Tuesday we made up the meal in the kitchen, drove to McDonald’s, got out of the car and came back with our meal already prepared. Craig loved it and completely accepted it as part of his normal routine.”**

Our staff have embraced technology more than ever, using iPads and smart speakers so the people we support can stay in contact with family and friends, play games, order shopping online, watch films and play music.



“It is hard not to see Darryl, but the support workers have definitely made it easier, and of course we want everybody to stay safe. I rang this morning and spoke to Darryl. Thank you so much FitzRoy for looking after him so well, you are all heroes.”

Clive (Darryl’s dad)



Staff wellbeing

To help with morale during these challenging times, we have made sure we are constantly recognising and sharing the amazing work going on across FitzRoy, including weekly blogs and social media posts.

Our use of Microsoft Teams has come into its own here, enabling us to build closer links between services, and opening up “face to face” contact between central support and our services.

We ran a staff temperature check survey so staff could tell us how they were feeling. The results showed how much pressure our staff were under, but also how so many of them relished that challenge and were going above and beyond both for the people they support and their colleagues. They told us that while they felt motivated and challenged, supported and valued, they also felt tired, stressed and anxious.

In response to the survey we launched a staff wellbeing initiative to build a culture of resilience and self-care, including wellbeing tools to reduce burnout and build supportive networks.

We have also developed a culture of recognising and thanking our staff, including personal thank you messages, texts and cards from our executive team.

"I feel we have had great support from our managers during what has been an incredibly stressful, worrying and challenging time, keeping staff morale up and supporting and protecting ourselves and residents. We have worked amazing as a team and all pulled together to keep everyone safe. It has made me realise what amazing people I work with and how lucky I am to work where I do."

Managing our finances

The long-term stability of the organisation has remained paramount. Our Board of Trustees offered flexible governance to enable us to effectively meet the needs resulting from the crisis. They moved from quarterly to monthly meetings to review the impact of coronavirus and specifically our financial performance, enabling us to move quickly and make timely decisions.

We strategically targeted spend to support the coronavirus response, for example by paying staff

for self-isolation and by mobilising a central PPE purchasing and supply function.

We enhanced our statutory sick pay offer, so staff would not be disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic. This also likely impacted on our ability to keep coronavirus out of our services. ONS data shows that care homes in which staff receive sick pay are less likely to have cases of COVID-19 compared with those care homes where staff do not receive sick pay.

Recognising and harnessing our strengths

This crisis will be remembered as a turning point. A time of challenge and adversity that strengthened the connection between us all and built a stronger, more resilient organisation. The coronavirus pandemic has helped us to think differently about how we work, and we have become a more agile organisation, resilient in times of adversity.

Our committed staff who are driven by our values are the biggest asset we have. Never has the importance of this been so stark as when we were faced with an unprecedented crisis such as coronavirus.

Our ability to embrace technology has undoubtedly been a game changer for us, and digital transformation will continue to be at the heart of our response to a changing and uncertain world.

This goes hand in hand with the transformational care we deliver every day. Within FitzRoy our personal relationships have never been healthier, with stronger bonds and connections being made across colleagues, teams, and families.





“I have seen such dedication from all staff across the services and I am so proud and honoured to work with such amazing people.”



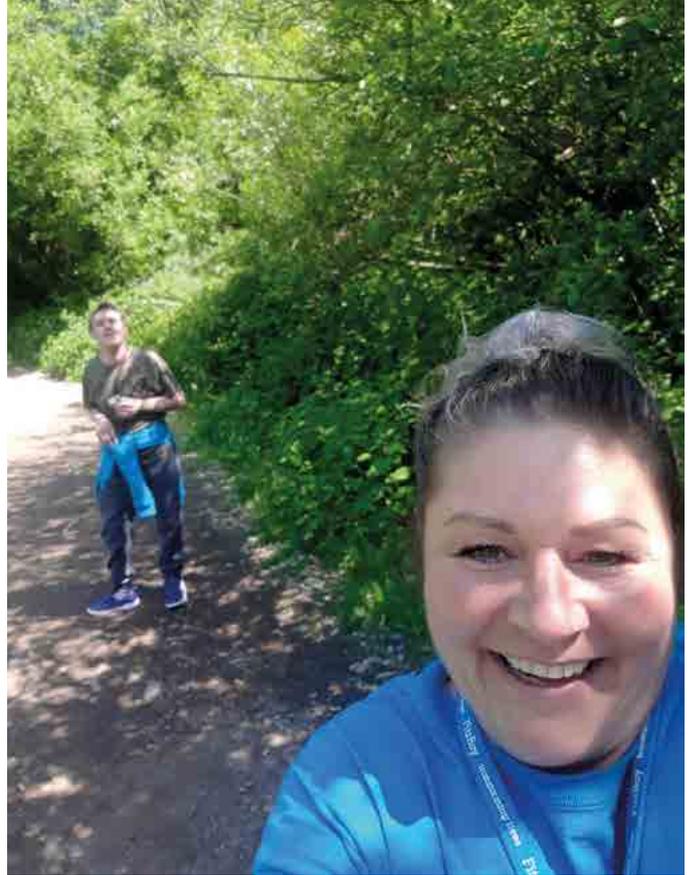
Surviving in a Covid-19 world

It has been clear through the government’s response to coronavirus that policy makers need a better understanding of the social care sector as it relates to working age adults. We provide a range of services for adults with learning disabilities and more than half the people we support live in supported living, not care homes.

Deaths in older people’s care homes have hit the news and the government has responded with PPE supplies, testing kits and funding. Support and guidance for care homes and supported living services, often for working age adults, such as the ones run by FitzRoy, have been left behind or completely forgotten. FitzRoy may well have avoided the deaths experienced by some care homes, but there is no doubt that the people we support are extremely vulnerable, many with underlying health conditions. This is borne out in the CQC data release for 10 April-15 May where notified deaths of people with a learning disability was up 134% on the previous year.

We are already looking at the coming weeks and months, and what that means for FitzRoy and the people we exist to support. We feel like we are as well prepared as we can be for a second wave – we continue to update and test our data collection to make sure it is fit for purpose and gives us what we need to continue our responsive decision making.

We have developed closer relationships with our commissioners as well as our colleagues in the sector – which all bodes well for future partnership working and our ability to share and learn lessons. And we will continue to innovate – with technology at the forefront of how we cope and grow in an uncertain world.



In the covid world our aspiration is to:

- Amplify the voice of the people we support, their families and our frontline staff and their demands for surviving and thriving in a covid world.
- Raise awareness of the needs of our supported living services, who have been consistently left out of coronavirus guidance and policy.
- Continue to live true to our values, ensuring that people with learning disabilities are at the forefront of every action we take and involved in decision making.
- Strive to recognise and meet the potential of the people we support, always challenging and pushing – for more, for better.



“I appreciate how FitzRoy are handling the current crisis and the way they are trying to balance the needs and best interests of staff and the people we support.”



What we need to survive in a Covid-19 world:

There is no doubt that the protection of the NHS was the government's priority at the beginning of this crisis. The social care sector didn't have the same level of focus or attention, and people with learning disabilities were seemingly forgotten. We will ensure our amazing staff – their commitment and their expertise – is not taken for granted. And that the people we support – often working age adults with learning disabilities, autism and other physical and mental health needs – are not overlooked.

"I am immensely proud to work for FitzRoy, of the work that we do and the amazing work our operational staff do on a day to day basis, always putting the people we support first, going above and beyond. We live and breathe our values and that is something that I am personally very proud of."

What do we want to see?

- A firm and genuine commitment from government for social care, addressing the chasm between the NHS and social care:

- Through training and development
- Pay and conditions

The learning disability support worker role has become increasingly specialist and demanding – they should be recognised for their expertise and paid accordingly.

- The needs of adults with learning disabilities are recognised and met through innovative support packages that recognise their potential, and increase their independence and choice.
- Recognition of the direct link between central government funding and local authority commissioning decisions, and an end to minimum wage commissioning.

Join the conversation



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