

My name is Mandy Wilcox, and I am the activities co-ordinator at Landona House Residential Home in Wem.

I have worked at Landona now for seven years, starting out as a care assistant. In January 2020 I was offered the post of activities co-ordinator which I jumped at!

Little did I know then what a tough and very trying year lay ahead!

When Covid-19 figures started to rise in the UK Landona made the decision to lockdown to visitors a couple of weeks before the official UK lockdown was announced. We were all very concerned and extremely worried that this potentially deadly virus would find it's way into our home and cause devastation.

Some of our staff who were in the 'vulnerable' category stayed home to shield, whilst the rest of us were determined to do our utmost to protect our residents – the people we had grown to love as a second family.

This was personally a very scary time for me as my whole family (partner, son, daughter and son-in-law) all work in the care sector. So as well as worrying about keeping the residents at work safe, I was also worrying about my family keeping themselves safe and none of us bringing anything home to each other!

Our manager put in place as many protection measures as possible – shoe dips at all entrances into the home, staff to change all clothes and footwear on entering and exiting the building, mask to be worn as mandatory, temperatures taken daily for both staff and residents, and only essential visitors permitted to enter. All deliveries, including daily post was wiped down thoroughly with antibacterial wipes. Residents were assisted to wash their hands as often as possible. Any residents who were admitted to hospital and then returned home were isolated for seven days and monitored closely for any symptoms while we used full barrier protection when in contact with them.

During lockdown our staff tried really hard to keep things as normal as possible for our residents. It wasn't easy for them seeing us wearing masks and not being able to see our faces or read our expressions, especially for those who are hard of hearing. I did try to create us see through masks but they weren't very successful!

From an activities point of view, my job was to try to keep everyone busy, entertained, and keep them in touch with their families as much as possible. We set up Skype, Facetime, Messenger, and our own Facebook page for photos and updates of everything we were doing. Messenger has proved very popular with families for video chatting, being easy to use and meaning any family with a Facebook account can call. We have even ordered a 32" Tiny Tablet which we'll be able to use for video chats on a much larger scale! Delivery in the next couple of weeks!



One of our residents family bought us a large marquee so we could pitch it on the front garden and continue with outside family and chiropodist visits. This has been a wonderful present as during the hot weather it meant the residents had shade to sit under when we sat on the front garden.

As we could no longer go out on day trips in our mini bus, or for walks up town, I started screening 'virtual trips out' on our large lounge TV. We had trips to the safari park, to Blists Hill Victorian Town, and even had a full length virtual circus which the residents thoroughly enjoyed! This

was served with proper circus music, candy floss, popcorn and helium balloons for everyone!

Our next trip is around the world with Google Earth! Taking residents to their home towns and places they holidayed and loved to visit!



One of the biggest thing we miss is live entertainment which we always had weekly. We have overcome this by finding wonderful singers and entertainers on YouTube who have made hour long entertainment videos especially for care homes. We screen them on our lounge TV and have a good old sing a long! I also dish out the bowls of chopped fresh fruit or choc ices which everyone really enjoys!

We have a resident who enjoys singing and used to go around singing in care homes, so she enjoys a turn on the karaoke and I also do my bit – which surprisingly the residents enjoy!

We have managed to squeeze in one outside entertainment visit, where we threw open the bi-folding doors in the lounge and the singer sang to us from the garden. This was brilliant, but the following week we were told that all Shropshire care homes were to lockdown again to visitors, so that ended that.



Last week I revamped an old brown wooded trolley into a bright, colourful sweet trolley, complete with old fashion weighing scales and retro sweets! It never cost a penny to make as I begged on Facebook and got donations from shops, members of the public and residents families. It's a huge hit and comes out on Mondays & Wednesdays to do it's rounds.



We also opened our own tattoo shop which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone including staff! A display board with stick on tattoos which everyone chose from. You're never too old you know!



During the 'clap for carers' time we brought it to Landona at 8pm on a Thursday night so that all the residents could join in with thanking all the frontline staff and keyworkers working hard to keep them safe. We even got in the newspaper and on the radio!

WATCH: Shropshire claps for carers and key workers for the fourth week

By [Bob Smith](#) | [Telford News](#) | Published: Apr 17, 2020

People all over Shropshire came out in droves to Clap For Our Carers for the fourth consecutive week.

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Staff at the Landona House residential home in Wern

During lockdown our community held a scarecrow competition. There were around 60 entries! We didn't win anything but we had some amazing comment on Facebook and had brilliant messy fun making them!



We painted
the Covid
local park.....

rocks to add to
snake in our



During
we sent
messages to
families.....

lockdown
Facebook
our



When VE Day arrived we wanted to join in with the celebrations as much as possible despite lockdown. Our manager and one of our care staff dressed in their Shropshire Army Cadet uniforms for photos with the residents and to add a little authenticity to the day for our residents. We then enjoyed a delicious VE Day lunch of Lord Woolton pie or Spam

fritters, mash & veg, all followed by bread and butter pudding! This was cooked by our chef who did an amazing job despite having a suspected broken toe! After lunch one of our care staff who is a member of Wem Jubilee Band came to play a few songs for us and we had a good old singalong. Then we watched Winston Churchill's victory speech and also King George's speech. To end the day we had a few tipples of either shandy or white wine and lemonade, and watched a VE Day singalong video screened onto our lounge TV and we sang and danced the afternoon away!



We



created a rainbow mural dedicated to all our staff who worked at Landona, to say thank you for all their dedicated, hard work.



On Grand National Day we made and ran our own Grand National with a medal for the winner!



So as you can see we have done as much as possible to keep our residents entertained and keep things as 'normal' as we can.

We have had our ups and downs. We have had a couple of lovely long term residents pass away (not Covid related), and we have also welcomed some wonderful new residents into our family.

We did have one very low point during May time when things got really tough....

One of our residents (we'll call her Tess), a 94 year old lady with type one diabetes was admitted into hospital for a few days whilst they stabilized her blood sugars. When Tess returned to Landona she was taken straight to her room for isolation as was normal procedure.

On day five of Tess' return she started showing symptoms of Covid-19. A high temperature, a cough, and general lethargy.

This shook us to the core! All our other residents were monitored closely, but thank God none ever showed any symptoms. Tess went downhill from then on and was extremely poorly. We had to give as basic care as possible due to our own safety, but with as much care and compassion as we had in us. We sat with her and fed her, gave her drinks, passed on messages from her family, and made her feel as loved as we possibly could!

Gradually, to all our amazement, our Tess started to get better!

She was still incredibly poorly, but her temperature went down to normal, she perked up and asked for a shower, she started eating more as she got her taste back, and eventually after 18 days in isolation Tess was allowed back downstairs to see all her friends!

I can't express enough how proud I am of not just Tess for fighting back from this awful awful virus, but of our strong, amazing and dedicated team of staff, from the domestics keeping everywhere scrupulously clean, to the care staff who work unbelievably hard keeping our residents healthy, clean and comfortable.

We consider ourselves extremely lucky at Landona that we haven't yet had a big Covid outbreak like some homes sadly have. God willing it stays that way.