



# demelza

extraordinary care for extraordinary children

## Supporting families beyond Nursing Care: The Implementation of a Practical Support Service

Mary Goodger, Practical Support Services Lead



1

1. In 2018, Demelza undertook a pilot with a small number of registered volunteers and a small cohort of families in Kent to offer a Practical Support Service.

A pilot enabled us to understand the needs of families and tailor the service to those identified tasks that were most in demand and would be most impactful. We began with a limited menu of tasks that volunteers could complete for families and began to offer transport for families to attend hospital appointments.

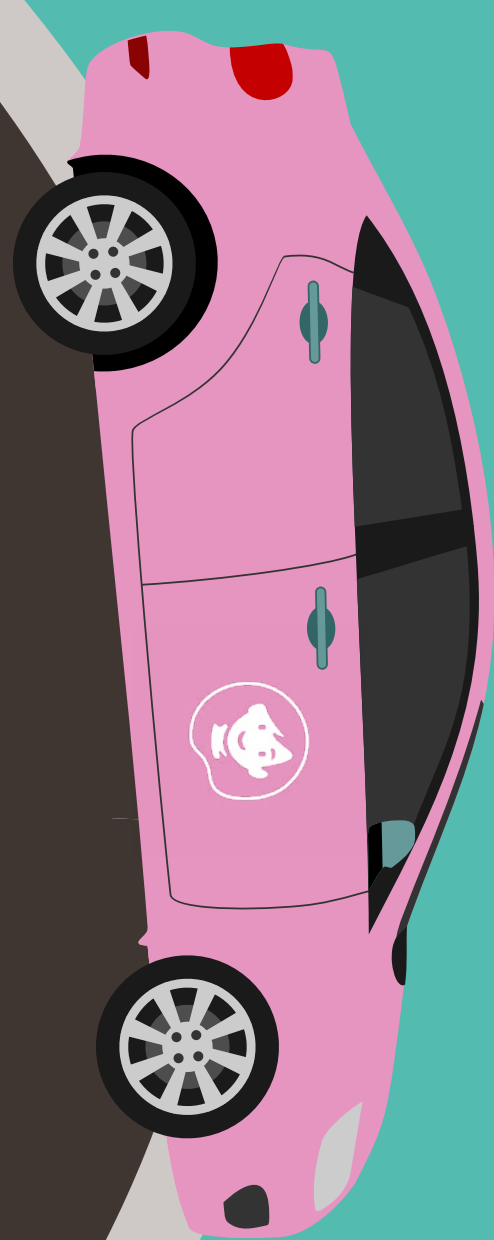


2. The pilot was successful and it taught us that some things needed to change, such as amending our terminology from 'general cleaning' to 'a deep clean', to clarify that it was a time-limited offer and not an ongoing free cleaning service. After the pilot was completed, feedback was gathered and presented to trustees.

The project was approved to continue as an established service and to develop upon the initial pilot. Our next task was to then consider expanding this offer into other areas of our catchment (South East London and East Sussex). We surveyed all families to further identify what was needed and in which areas.



2



3. The service grew from strength to strength as more families across Kent engaged with the offer and we began to prepare to launch in South East London in September 2019, including driving for families to and from appointments.

At this point, we also identified the need for wheelchair-accessible vehicles. We initially only had wheelchair-accessible minibuses which required specialist training and were not ideal for Practical Support purposes.



3

4

4. We ran robust recruitment campaigns for new volunteers and delivered a full day's training to new recruits.

The service grew and was received well across Kent and South East London.

5. COVID-19 hits: This gave us opportunities to work differently and become more accessible in new ways.

- We started using video calls to meet with families to discuss their needs.
- We provided much-needed maintenance for a family's outdoor space to make it accessible during the pandemic.
- The driving continued throughout lockdown, diversifying through PPE deliveries and therapy bag deliveries to families who were isolating and taking part with our therapies team over video calls.



5



6. Winter 2020: Each year, we deliver the Festive Wishes project, allowing children and their families to meet Santa, receive presents, or even have an elf deliver gifts to their homes. This was sadly not possible due to the pandemic, so as an alternative we delivered 400 gifts to families with volunteers dressed as elves and with robust infection control protocols in place.



6



7

7. The challenge the pandemic presented also forced us to adapt our service. Whilst we still facilitate home visits for initial meetings where needed, being able to use video calls for them has meant we are now more widely accessible, efficient and environmentally-friendly. We have streamlined the volunteer training so this can also be delivered over video calls, as well as face to face.

8

8. Developments since the pandemic:
- We deliver the Festive wishes project every year.
  - We collaborate with a local foodbank to provide easier access for families in need.
  - We deliver therapy bags so that more families are able to access therapy sessions online.

**The impact of this service is allowing families to spend more quality time together by taking the burden of practical tasks from their shoulders. Whether that is playing with their children whilst the bathroom is deep cleaned, or being able to hold their hand and reassure them on the way to hospital – these small tasks are making a big difference.**

# demelza.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1039651

Demelza's Guide to Services

