

vHelp reduces Ilkley & District Good Neighbours shopping service costs by 75 per cent



Ilkley & District Good Neighbours (IDGN) supports older people living independently in the areas of Ilkley and Wharfedale, West Yorkshire. In 2020, the charity saw a surge in demand for its support when older residents were advised to self-isolate under Covid rules.

IDGN's original ShopAssist service, which allowed clients to shop independently with volunteer support, under lockdown became a Shop & Dropservice which saw volunteers shopping alone on behalf of the client. With the client no longer present for the shop, the charity had to very quickly come up with a solution for reimbursing the volunteer who was now paying for the shop.

It was important that IDGN retained oversight of the payments between the client and volunteer and so established a process whereby the volunteer was paid by the charity on presentation of a photo of the receipt and then the charity requested payment by invoice from the client. Whilst this process ensured traceability of all payments it was administratively cumbersome with charity staff working many hours to ensure volunteers were paid in a timely manner and that client accounts were up to date.

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Required a simple solution

In October 2020, it turned to vHelp Shopping for help. Since then, the charity has signed up/registered 10 pairs of volunteers and older residents to use vHelp Shopping. Collectively, the volunteers have carried out more than 75 shopping tasks on behalf of older residents, with transactions ranging from £1.30 up to £79.00. On average, the volunteers have been reimbursed with 24 hours of their claim being approved but sometimes within three to four hours of approval.



IDGN began by focusing on clients whose invoices were already being paid by a family member using bank transfer. The charity was able to sell vHelp on the basis that its automatic payments are a useful time-saver to busy relatives.

Old processes had problems

For clients who were paying for their own shopping, almost always by cheque, it was about finding opportunities to have the conversation about vHelp and sharing how it could help. For instance, some clients experienced cheques going missing in the post, accidentally overlooked a payment or even just struggled to get to a post box so the ShopAssist Coordinator discussed how vHelp could avoid those issues for them in the future.

From IDGN's perspective, vHelp reduces the administration and cost associated with the payments side of the shopping service by 75%.



Positive feedback

ShopAssist coordinator, Charlotte Atkinson, says:

“vHelp has made such a difference to the processing of volunteer payments. We can now approve payment of our volunteers at the touch of a button and payment is direct from client to volunteer. This is saving us huge amounts of staff time and has eliminated the human errors we inevitably saw from time to time.”

One of the Shop & Drop volunteers, Anne, says:

“The vHelp app works very well for me. Taking the photo and logging it onto the app is straightforward. It is also good to have one place where I can keep track of all the jobs that have been completed/are in progress when I check my bank account.”

One service user says:

“I have found vHelp very useful. It has both sped up and simplified the way in which volunteers are reimbursed. I have been banking online for many years and like to pay what I owe as quickly as possible. The vHelp system enables me to do that.”

vHelp

For further information, please contact the vHelp team on

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