

Coniston Carers have been providing social care to people in Coniston and the surrounding area for 20 years. They have a team of carers who visit people at home and the support they offer can help older people stay in their own homes and in the local community.

Coniston is a parish with around 900 residents in over 400 households. It's centred around the village of Coniston on the edge of Coniston Water in the centre of the Lake District. There is a GP practice, range of shops, a primary school and secondary school. The nearest hospitals are in Barrow-in-Furness - 22 miles away, or Kendal - 20 miles away.

Background

In 1995 Coniston Care Scheme Ltd, known locally as Coniston Carers, was set up by local residents which included the GP and district nurse.

The scheme was set up when it became clear that care agencies were unwilling to take on clients in the area due to its remote location. As a result, older residents were going into residential homes earlier than they needed to.

The Project

Coniston Carers is a locally based care agency which only takes on clients in Coniston and the immediate area including the villages of Torver and Hawkshead.

It's a Limited Company but works on a not-for-profit basis and aims to only cover its costs.

As with all care agencies, it's registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and inspected by them. There is a registered manager who manages the company along with a co-partner.

They employ nine part-time carers who work over five or six days/week. Currently they are caring for 21 clients and on average will visit their clients three times per day.



The Coniston Carers Team

Carers help with a range of tasks including:

- Preparing food;
- Helping their clients to get up, washed and dressed;
- Helping them to take medication.

In some cases they will also take them to the local shops or will visit to give a resident carer, such as a husband or wife, a break.

Most of the employees fit their work around other part-time employment and their own family commitments.

The business' income comes from payments made by clients for the care they receive. For those on lower incomes this is covered by the state and they also receive donations from local fundraising and charities.



The centre of the village of Coniston

What has been achieved?

Coniston Carers helps older people to stay in their own homes and, therefore, their own community near to family and friends.

The nearest residential homes to Coniston are in Windermere (12 miles away) or Ulverston (14 miles away) and so people who can't live independently would have to leave the village.

Being locally based Coniston Carers is accountable to the community and to their clients in a way that a large care agency, employing people from outside the area, might not be. They are also providing employment for local people.

The Learning

Coniston Carers works because they focus on a small geographical area which means visits can be made quickly without long travelling times across a large rural area.

This makes the care cost effective and it also means that they can employ local people to do short visits to clients as they can easily combine these with other commitments.

They have tried delivering across a wider area but try not to take on clients outside

their main area of focus as they find it difficult to reach them quickly especially in the summer when there are lots of visitors and traffic problems or in winter when the weather can be bad.

The company started small and focused on providing a good quality service and then built up to taking on larger numbers of clients. They are now taking on clients with more complex needs they may not have felt able to manage when they started.

All care providers need to be registered with the CQC which should be the starting point for any other community interested in starting a local care agency.

Contact Details

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For information on care agencies and regulation contact the Care Quality Commission on Tel: 03000 616161 or visit: www.cqc.org.uk

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