



  
**Helping Hands**  
Caring since 1989

**Because, life is better at home**

Third-party independent Ethical review  
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By Jane Bladon, TylerBladon Practical Ethics.

## An Overview

Helping Hands has a proven track record of providing excellent standards of service to clients seeking Home Care with a genuine focus on the welfare of all their clients and team members, encompassing the carers on the front line and all the central personnel. All are working together with a shared passion to make a difference in people's lives, built on their Foundation of Kindness.

During a review of the process to engage carers from overseas, with a specific focus on the South African recruitment route, I interviewed a number of employees to listen to their experiences of working with Helping Hands, and what was immediately obvious to me was how proud they are to work for the business.

As with all companies, regular reviews of all processes built around service delivery are essential to implement ideas for continuous improvement, some of which I have included later in this report. But equally important is to focus on the positive features to ensure that they are recognised and elevated to draw the deserved attention for the brand and all those that work within Helping Hands.

It's important that at this point I mention that during my time working with Helping Hands, it's apparent that everyone who works for Helping Hands, strives exceed in providing the best quality service that they can for their clients, their client's families & colleagues.

The dedication of all the colleagues I have had the pleasure of meeting has been evident in our exchanges which is the main reason I believe that they are so committed to supporting their internal teams and continuing to provide high ethical standards of service. Their shared vision runs continuously as a heartbeat through the business, and I believe this distinctive detail will protect the Helping Hands brand, and all those working within the business and contribute strongly to its continued success.

## Background Research

To fully understand how Helping hands operates as a successful private home care provider, following exploration of reviews on the internet, the first avenue I took to find out the detail behind the brand was to engage some of the senior members of the team, colleagues working in the central hub, and carers on the frontline.

Learning how customers perceive a business is critical for Helping hands to build a people-centric culture that strives to build on all the comments provided, learning from the feedback will help improve the best possible experience for their clients.

Helping hands openly encourage through their marketing, and feedback from their clients and their carers and Trustpilot has collected over 1600 reviews, with 77% rating Helping hands Homecare as a 5-star service.

A snippet of some of the words to describe the service they have received, used from clients are shown below:



The website features short videos to view both carers and client's experiences, complemented with written testimonials from existing clients, an excellent way to help provide new prospective clients with an insight into what they can expect from their relationship with Helping Hands.

## Hearing from the team.

In total, I have spoken to 19 members of the Helping Hands team, a mixture of the central and field-based teams and a selection of carers, both in general conversation, meetings in person and meetings held on Facetime 1-2-1. All of this has been extremely helpful, allowing me to hear all sides to gather different experiences. I was also able to review anonymised responses from employee surveys.

Every person I have spoken to has been very welcoming, open, and engaging taking the time to give me some valuable positive feedback, whilst offering some ideas to improve some aspects of the service offering to carers, which I have listed below:

## The recruitment and initial training process

- There can be better focus on how to cook simple English food giving skills to cope with the difference in tastes & cultures. Go through some simple menu ideas, and practical experiences to try out on British appliances to help the carers understand the tastes of their clients.
- A Video to be shown on the initial assessment day in SA\* the type of typical place of residence showing a carer at work to help the candidates get a more improved insight into what it's like, showing the carer cooking too.
- Driving awareness course for driving in the UK to help the transition for a carer to get used to driving in a different country to what they are used too.
- Supermarket shopping support, as UK supermarkets can be different from other countries.
- More on the tablet training, dummy runs - scenarios to test inputting a report correctly, a few times to get used to the way the tablet works to store notes electronically.
- More common-sense scenarios focusing specifically on adapting to different patients' needs.

\*SA- South Africa

## During placement

- Ask the carers what they would like to hear about in news updates, and newsletter content makes it more focused on the needs of the carer.
- Connection with other carers, forums, social events - buddying, forming friendships.
- More communication between central & carers, as much as time allows.
- More recognition for the work that carers do in general.
- Increased focus on Career paths, development opportunities & plans, and progression for roles.
- Advanced training on dealing with Dementia.

Helping Hands operates as one team, and the team members are very complimentary of the business and its service offerings. When I asked for ideas of how they thought Helping Hands could enhance the carer's experience in any way, I heard some great suggestions which I have detailed below.

- Increased information to be given to carers in SA before they make the journey over. ( as detailed above.)
- Online webinars as a way of showing new carers what life is like over here in the UK, help meet their expectations and reduce any anxieties that may come from such a change in their current lifestyle for them.
- Dummy kitchen for carers to use during the assessment period to have a test at preparing basic dishes. (Subsequently this has been adopted)
- Meet and greet in person at the airport as the carers arrive. A nicer warm welcome.

- Upskill the care coordinators to help settle in the carers, help them work the appliances, etc.
- Special group of carers to help new ones settle in before moving on to help another.
- Video showing around a typical kitchen and appliances, and how to work them for the carers.

Gathering and acting on feedback and listening to the carers that perform their roles is not only valuable for a company to improve standards & learn and evolve the business but also goes a long way to helping the carers feel valued. Cultivating inclusion can positively impact employees' well-being and performance, leading to innovation & creativity from employees giving them a sense of belonging and connection to the company. Asking carers for ideas on how to improve their experience will provide clear and focused ideas for improvement.

## Assessment and learning.

I was able to join an assessment in person, with a large group of new arrivals, mainly from South Africa. The learning environment was very welcoming, refreshments were provided, and pleasant introductions from various members of the assessment and associated team. The new arrival carers were comfortable, listened to the training intensely with ease, and asked many questions throughout. A quality that stood out from the very beginning of the session was the natural bond that the lead assessor had with the audience, coming from South Africa herself relating to their homeland, lives, and experience, truly magnetic and inspiring. From viewing the assessment first-hand, I can't think of a better start to the carer's role here with Helping Hands in the UK. The detail provided to cover all the duties needed to be a competent carer, and the experiences shared through storytelling from the lead assessor Amanda, to help relate to the attendees was very heartening and reassuring. From hearing in advance of attending this session, from some of the team, I am surprised that there appeared to be some concerns shared at the time about the full content provided. There were some suggestions given to me of more training needed to help the carers be fully competent. But with the sheer amount of what was covered in this week's assessment, I have struggled to identify any gaps. Maybe a good idea would be for the LICMs\* to sit in and observe as I did, to see for themselves and offer suggestions if they feel relevant to feel reassured that the training is comprehensive.

\*LICM- Live-in Care Managers

## The Recruitment route from South Africa to the UK

Due to the carers coming from overseas, the best practice is to check the recruitment route to mitigate any concerns of Human Trafficking/ Modern Slavery happening. I have gathered the relevant information, provided to me, and spoke to some of the group of carers from the recent assessment to understand the stages of their journey for work in the UK, focusing on their initial enquiries and applications for working for Helping Hands.

Before candidates are approved to come to the UK for the role here, they attend an assessment day in SA, at the Helping Hands registered location, which is run by two members of the SA Helping Hands team. This is an excellent idea for the potential carers to meet representatives of the company that they will be working for at the first stage of their application, and a valuable piece to give them the information provided to find out more and check if the role will suit them before they commit and take their journey to the UK. It reduces any chance of a third-party agent getting in the way to interfere and potentially charge work-finding fees. It's illegal to pay for work in the UK, but unfortunately, exploiters are on the increase seizing opportunities to infiltrate employment routes to charge potential workers extortionate fees, so it's important that due diligence checks are completed to help mitigate any damage to our workers or to the brand.

None of the workers that I interviewed have paid any fees for work here or been approached and asked to pay fees.

During the safeguarding part of the assessment delivered by Amanda, day 4 of their training week, there was a session which laboured heavily on the dangers of Modern Slavery and where and how to report if anyone has any concerns, so I am satisfied that this is covered well.

Research shows a higher risk of labour exploitation occurring in the care sector when agencies are involved in the recruitment and placement process. Some of the reasons listed for this are.

- Sleep deprivation, with their rest periods being limited and their breaks being used to run errands for their client.
- A high volume of non-care related tasks is associated with domestic tasks for the whole family, not limited to their direct client.
- Inadequate working and living conditions and
- Insufficient contracts for employment.

With Helping Hands employing their carers directly, with no agencies present in the chain, a lot of these identified risks are mitigated. There is a strong focus on the carer's documentation & records, and well-being. If night-time- disturbances occur, these are monitored, and sufficient steps are taken to cover the night times to help the live-in carer. Assessments are carried out at every location in detail before any carers are placed, breaks are covered with other carers to allow the suitable rest periods needed, and detail in matching skills and personalities together to help the process run smoothly for the engagement in carers to clients' lives, this is just a few of the examples of robust focused, strong processes in place.

A clear escalation process is explained to all the carers at the time of their assessment and is in place if they need to report any concerns during their work placements and regular visits from the LICMs are important steps to reduce the risk of mistreatment and/or exploitation for the workforce.



## Additional information.

The University of Nottingham Rights lab collaborating with Flex, a London-based charity working to end Human Trafficking for Labour exploitation conducted research and published a report earlier this year showing some interesting findings whilst focusing on the vulnerability of migrant live-in care workers in London during a period of 18 months over 2021-2022. A selection of live-in care workers were interviewed, from South Africa, Zimbabwean communities, Poland & Hungary. This is an impressive piece of work to study to understand the risk of exploitation in this sector to help minimise any risks in the future for Helping Hands.

For ease, I have listed some of the issues flagged by this research and some other background research with care providers, and the ways that Helping Hands can minimise those risks happening in their business, from my learnings.

Area of potential general concern	Helping Hands process
Carers not knowing how to register with their GPs	This is covered during their assessment, and direction and support is provided.
Some are experiencing inadequate working and living conditions	An assessment is completed by a manager at the client's home to check the environment & determine the care package needed.
Lack of training & equipment for safe handling and moving	Training is covered in the assessment, and equipment is provided as part of the care package.
Inadequate food provision	Shopping is often included in the care package and meals are taken together with the client. Where this doesn't happen a separate payment for food is made to the carer.
Lack of support from the customer's family members during placement.	The review after the 1 <sup>st</sup> week of a carer being in place and regular communications between the LICMs and the carers provides the opportunity to flag concerns and deal with them.
Lack of support or connection to other carers/peers.	Carers are encouraged to join WhatsApp groups to stay in touch.
Hidden costs for carers in their employment contract	All costs are transparent & outlined clearly in the carer's introduction day in SA. Once a carer is in the UK, HH takes the costs themselves.
Intermediary agencies taking fees or poor matching carers to placements.	No agencies are used, HH only recruits carers directly.
The emotional and physically intensive nature of the work can blur the boundaries between work and private life.	Breaks are clearly outlined, taken and the time covered by other carers to ensure compliance.
Unclear wages or payslips, unlawful deductions.	All salary details are clearly outlined in the assessment time, and payslips are received weekly with no unexpected deductions taken.
Sleep deprivation/ poor mental health	If there is a pattern of night-time disturbances for the carer, this is flagged to central, and the

	cover is put in place to support to cover these times.
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## Mental Health support.

Being mentally fit aides the carer to perform to his/her best, continuously offer the best levels of service as a front-line representative of Helping Hands, and also supports the individuals during their employment. Whilst I have found the support network from the live-in care managers and central teams to be strong, I feel that there are always ways to help support people's mental health. Providing a Mental Health toolbox may help the carers and is something that can be implemented relatively easy that can go a long way. A potential suggestion is to add to the welcome folder already provided to new starter carers. In this toolbox, some suggestions are listed below:

- Desk calendars with happy refreshing daily quotes/ affirmation cards.
- Well-being activity book- full of self-care tips, and puzzles for downtime.
- A book on mindfulness/meditation, can help clear minds quickly and efficiently.
- Self-care box of soothing balm, toiletries, and sprays.
- A journal and HH pen for carers to jot down their feelings or experiences.
- A notebook to jot down ideas or positive feedback to share with their LICM at review times.
- Health and wellness coach contact to chat too in low times or if they need a pick-me-up chat. Health & Wellness first aiders at hand to be proactive and check in on carers.

Learning new skills, exercising, and connecting with others are some of the top strategies to help boost a person's mental health, so if we can keep our carers learning, developing, feeling accomplished in their role, and in contact with people outside of their place of work and residence, this can go a long way to supporting carers further. A mixture of line manager & care coordinator contact checking in, in person and via email/ phone, and joining a network/ forum with other carers is the key I believe. Carers promoting Helping Hands as a great place to work is the key to the success of the business, whilst providing the ultimate care experience for both the client and their carer.

## Quality assurance accreditation

Every encounter I have had with the Helping Hands team has been wonderful, everyone has made me feel welcome, and accommodating and all were very approachable, answering my many questions about the business and its processes. It's clear that the carers are at the heart of the organisation, and Helping Hands prides itself on making the experience as informative & comfortable as possible for every person. There are some truly awful stories in this industry about carers being subject to mistreatment, and experiencing terrible practices, a lot making news headlines, but some of the smaller issues are not being raised and being unheard of or completely hidden.

CHKS is a healthcare accreditation service and would be great to support Helping Hands to review their whole service operation and help raise the profile to enhance the brand with a recognised accreditation to use as a USP, promote & celebrate the exceptional



standards of care provided for both carers and their clients. CHKS will introduce and support you through a self-assessment to help identify any weaknesses or gaps to work on to improve, then will check your submission and work in partnership with you to obtain the accreditation, which is valid for 3 years.

I have enclosed their brochure to hear more about their services and the link below takes you to their website, just for interest.

<https://www.chks.co.uk/Accreditation-and-Quality-Assurance>

## Summary

From a review of the whole recruitment process. I can see the carer's application and the immediate process that follows that first stage and through to the assessment is clear, robust, welcoming, and accommodating.

Providing the best possible experience for carers is certainly something that the senior leadership team in Helping hands supports which is encouraging to see.

Listening to the carers themselves, their feedback is invaluable to hear but also listening to them and acting on some of that feedback makes them feel valued and part of that bigger organisation.

The service standards from the operational teams are a mirror of the welcome from the assessment team. Both teams run a continuous improvement review and process in place. I have no doubt from the passion and care I have experienced from so many at Helping Hands that this support will continue.

Meeting the new business team and the finance team, the willingness to help customers fulfil their service needs and the community atmosphere in the office is both charming & captivating, the standards emulating the experience from the assessors.

I recognise that there are exceptional relationships from the teams in operations, central and the carers, I have witnessed some excellent practices that would certainly benefit other service providers in the UK.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Helping Hands and would like to thank everyone for their support and contributions to help capture all the information for this report.

Kind regards,



Jane Bladon  
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