

staff in the SPOT light

This month:
GARY FOREMAN
delivery driver,
Alliance Healthcare
Service Centre
Chessington

Gary Foreman has dedicated his life to his career as a delivery driver at the Alliance Healthcare Service Centre in Chessington. **Millie Browning** finds out more



Gary Foreman has worked at the Alliance Healthcare Service Centre in Chessington since 1992.

“I’ve got customers who are pharmacists now that I met when they were seven or eight years old,” laughs delivery driver Gary Foreman. “They are the sons and daughters of the original owners who went off to uni and have come back and taken over!”

Gary started at the Alliance Healthcare Service Centre in Chessington in February 1992 and has been committed to the job since day one. “I’ve been here nearly 31 years and I’ve done the same route for the last 26,” he

explains. “I started as a porter for a couple of years in transport, but I wanted to earn more money, so I applied to be a van driver. It’s the best job I’ve ever had!”

Everything I’ve done in my life, I’ve got through this job. It’s like what I say to some of the new guys: ‘Don’t think of it as a job, it’s more of a lifestyle’. That’s the way I look at it. You need people to be reliable in this job. You need them to turn up every day, on time, ready to start the day.”

Innovative technology

Over the 30 plus years that Gary has worked for Alliance Healthcare, new technology has been introduced to make the job easier. A key aspect of this is the Smartpod which, among other things, logs a driver’s route, the products that are needed for each specific shop and drop, as well as driver performance.

“It’s got all the addresses of everywhere I go,” explains Gary. “It tells you if you speed, it tells you if you brake harshly or if

you go around a corner too quickly. It gives you everything – it’s amazing. When I first started here, they literally wrote the numbers onto a bit of paper and you would check them off. This is so much easier.”

A typical day

For Gary, a typical day at work starts very early in the morning. “I usually get to work at about

“Then I’ll go and get the products that need temperature control – we call them fridges – from the fridge aisle and put those on the van. Controlled drugs (CDs) are always last because you don’t want to leave the back doors of the van open once you’ve got them.”

After any discrepancies in the orders are checked over, Gary leaves the service centre to start his

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6:20am. I’ll unload from the night before because, fortunately, I can take the van home, so I’ve got all my empties on it still,” he says. “The porters will bring out my pallets and I’ll start sorting them out and loading them on, scanning each parcel as I go.”

Whilst not mandatory, Gary likes to bring order to the way he packs his van, making the process easier when it comes to unloading products for his individual customers. “I have different sections for my route,” he explains. “All the bulkhead stuff will go in one line, middle will go in the other, nearest to the doors will go in third and then my biggest shop will go on the floor just around the side of the van. Once everything has been split, then I’ll start breaking it all down, putting it in the right places.

route. “I don’t travel far for my first one,” he says. “I pull up, press the ‘arrive’ button on my device and look and see what I’ve got. I then make the delivery, scan the orders in front of the customers and off we go again, onto the next customer. Smooth as clockwork.”

Once he’s delivered all of his goods, Gary drives back to the depot, ready to start his afternoon shift. “I have a lunch break and then drive around, log onto our device and see what I’ve got in the afternoon, and do it all over again,” he says.

Alliance Healthcare has a two-deliveries-a-day promise to its customers, meaning Gary’s afternoons can vary, depending on what shops have requested for that additional order. “For example, this afternoon,” he

“The job has only got better and better since I first started. I wouldn’t swap this for anything.”

explains, “I’ve only got 17 drops and that should get me home for half-past five – my last shop is just up the road from where I live.”


A friendly face

According to Gary, getting to know his customers is what can make all the difference to his day.

“I like the familiarity,” he says. “I’ve got a bit of everything. I’ve got a couple of Boots pharmacies, a couple of LloydsPharmacy branches, a Day Lewis pharmacy. I also do the Royal Marsden hospital and Ashted private hospital. Other than that, it’s mainly independents.

“They make the job easy for me. I can talk for England, so I have a good chat with them; they have a good chat with me. I can’t say there’s one shop that I go to and it’s awkward.”

It’s this part of the job that Gary says he enjoys the most.

“There’s nothing that phases me here,” he says. “I like the little bits. Saying hello to everyone in the morning when I get here, seeing and talking to my customers, getting out in the van, driving. The job has only got better and better since I first started. I wouldn’t swap this for anything.” 

sound familiar?

If you feel like you have a special story to share about the work you do in the pharmacy, the times you’ve helped a customer in need, spotted something that led to an important diagnosis or even when you managed to keep your team’s spirits up and supported your colleagues, we want to hear about it!



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