



## CASE STUDY

# Leeds Samaritans achieves industry-leading Gift Aid returns with help of BMC Azurri

The Samaritans Leeds Branch is gearing up to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2016, since its inception in 1966. The Samaritans Charity in the UK has continued to grow into the thriving 200+ branch organisation that we see today. A move into charity retail was a logical step for many of the individual branches, most of which currently operate independently, with their own board of trustees and volunteers.

The Samaritans network currently comprises 201 branches across the UK and Republic of Ireland and operates a simple trust structure, with a large proportion remaining as independent branches. With 21,000 volunteers and an average ratio of 96:1 volunteers to staff, they continue to have the largest proportion of volunteers to staff of any charity in the UK and consider themselves a truly volunteer-led organisation.

The Leeds Samaritans retail store was established in 2012 after the branch director decided they needed to open a local shop to help boost their community presence. Since then, it has received much support from the local community. It has given many local people the opportunity to get back into work and has also supported a number of foreign students too. The store now has a paid manager and a team of 12 regular and 10 occasional volunteers. Over the years, the store has worked with approximately 60-70 volunteers.

### The Challenge

Unlike many charities, Leeds Samaritans already had a strong understanding of the potential increased revenue that could be achieved from claiming Gift Aid on store donations, so the decision to implement a Gift Aid system was an essential part of their initial store set-up plan. The team knew that they needed a solution which would enable them to have full visibility of the Gift Aid process at any time, whilst being easy to use for the many volunteers working in the store. As each Samaritans branch operates independently, they also needed to find a provision that would be cost effective at a single store level.

### The BMC Azurri Solution

The store-build team went in search of potential Gift Aid solutions and came across charity IT specialists BMC Azurri. Having seen that BMC Azurri had existing Gift Aid solutions installed in other charity shops in the Leeds area, they went to visit the store to take a look.

“We researched several solutions but really liked the look and feel of the BMC Azurri system. Their credibility in the charity marketplace and the fact that we could see their solution in action in a similar store locally was very reassuring and helped confirm to us that it was the right choice for our store,” explains Alwyne.



**“People in Leeds like the fact that all the profits from the shop go back into the Leeds Branch Samaritans to help local people.”**

Alwyne Greenbank, a volunteer at Leeds Samaritans.

**SAMARITANS**



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### A smooth transition

The results certainly speak for themselves. Leeds Samaritans currently has one of the highest GA returns BMC Azurri has seen, at 50%, higher than most charities, and the highest figures for any of the Samaritans branches supported by BMC Azurri.

Alwyne explains more;

“Because we started right from the beginning with Gift Aid it’s been easy and we haven’t had to get the volunteers to change. They find the system really easy to use and it’s so reliable, so we don’t need to contact the support team at BMC Azurri very often at all!

We look at the detailed reports and Gift Aid readings available through the BMC Azurri system regularly to help find out what is doing well and what isn’t when it comes to products and promotions. We can even drill down to see how much we’ve made on an individual sale. It’s also helped us to manage the peaks and troughs in terms of local retail trends, so for example we know that July/August is a quieter time in terms of Gift Aid donations, as we get a lot of contributions from moving students who aren’t eligible for Gift Aid on their donations. The system has been instrumental in helping the store to develop and grow over the past couple of years.”

### Looking to the future

Samaritans nationally are embarking on a challenging and exciting strategy to take them forward to 2015, with the aim of reaching out to more people, being there for everyone at any time and with the intention of making the service free to callers.



**“Because of the potential changes in the pipeline, there are no immediate plans to open a second Leeds Samaritans shop, but we are confident that the store is now an asset to the branch.”**

Alwyne Greenbank, a volunteer at Leeds Samaritans.



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