



## CASE STUDY

# BMc Azurri help Bury Hospice to get in-store Gift Aid back on track



Bury Hospice is open 24 hours a day, helping people come to terms with a life limiting illness, managing their symptoms and giving support, care and advice to those who need it at the time when they need it the most. They look after the whole person, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically, as well as physically, and have a holistic approach to the patient and families. The care it provides is without exception of the highest standard and is utterly compassionate. Their aim is to be the “Pride of Bury” and its surrounding townships by helping people to fulfil their wishes during life shortening illnesses.

Bury Hospice operates six retail shops and a furniture warehouse across the Borough, which accept and resell goods from members of the public. The charity shops are considered a lifeline for Bury Hospice, raising approximately 20% of their income, all of which goes towards patient care.

### The Challenge

Like many charities, the Bury Hospice shops were facing a number of challenges including high street competition, reduced rag prices, quality of donations and a general decrease in the number of donations. These challenges meant the charity had to work harder to maximise income which increased the importance of a strong Gift Aid conversion rate on donated sales.

The shops already had a Gift Aid solution in place, but it was part of an over-complex system which had been originally designed for traditional retail and had been adapted for the charity sector. This meant that many of the volunteers who worked in the shops really struggled to get to grips with the system and some simply refused to use the till because of its complexity.

There were also a number of hidden costs with the existing system, which made it very difficult to maximise its benefits without having to spend additional money which the charity simply couldn't justify. One example was the new member of the retail management team requested a meeting to familiarise herself with the system and was told it would cost £500 as it would be classed as “training”.

Additionally, the reliability of the existing system was proving to be a major issue, with the tills regularly going down and being out of service for over a week, thus reducing the ability to capture Gift Aid during that time. The support provided by the existing supplier was generally poor and requests for call-backs were often not returned.

**“Our branch managers found themselves spending lots of time trying to sort out our IT problems when they really needed to be dedicating their time to more important tasks”**

**Sam Duncan, Retail & Volunteer Services Manager at Bury Hospice.**



## The BMc Azurri Solution

BMc Azurri was initially recommended to Sam by Carol Varey from Willowbrook Hospice, after they met at a retail gathering of local hospice retail managers. Following the positive feedback given by Carol, Sam decided to explore what BMc Azurri could offer to Bury Hospice.

Sam put forward her recommendations to the board and as there were already plans in place to expand their retail operation, it seemed the perfect opportunity to trial the BMc Azurri system in their new furniture shop.

“We decided to run both systems in parallel putting the BMc Azurri system into the new shop, so we had a 6 month dual supplier trial, and after the trial we were able to demonstrate a successful trial and a great relationship with BMc Azurri” explains Sam..

## The Personal Touch

Bury Hospice didn't feel the need to look at many other solutions as following the initial recommendation, meeting with the team at BMc Azurri and completing the trial in the furniture shop, they were convinced that the solution and the team behind it, would provide real benefits for Bury Hospice.

“Bob listened and was open and approachable and didn't sell an all singing all dancing solution. The costing was very transparent and there was no misunderstanding over the costs. We love the fact that it is a personal relationship with Bob and Iain, something we simply didn't have in the past. They also have a good team of staff who really know what they are doing. The fact that they are all charity specific and not general retail means they understand our challenges and how the whole thing works. There's no need to get them up to speed because they already know the industry which means we are all working on the same page,” explains Sam.

After the furniture shop trial, Bury Hospice and BMc Azurri worked to get the full system implemented in all the shops within two weeks, converting one shop a day over two weeks during a bank holiday – so a total of 9 days.

## A Bright Future Ahead

Since implementing the BMc Azurri system, volunteers who wouldn't use the old till are now happy to use the new system. Shop managers without exception have embraced the system and now love it. Even those who were sceptical about the change are delighted with it and are championing it to their volunteers based on its ease of use.

“It's just so great to be able to pick up the phone and talk to the BMc Azurri team and each time we can get through to Bob or Iain as can our shop managers, they know who they are talking to and there is a continuity which makes life so much easier. It's also great to have their support and advice across all areas of our business, not just our IT systems,” says Sam.

Gift Aid has now increased by 45% in comparison to last year as the system continues to attract more volunteers to use it and the shop managers are able to focus on managing the shop instead of troubleshooting. This has led to a significant increase in the number of donors being signed up. Further improvement in the Gift Aid performance is being targeted in conjunction with BMc Azurri training program to enhance the skills and confidence of the volunteers.

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