



Sandra Currie

Chief Executive
Kidney Research UK



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Like most research charities who rely on fundraising income, Kidney Research UK were hit hard by the impact of COVID-19 and needed to make some difficult decisions to protect their research funding. These decisions included having to cancel new research grant rounds, so they could ensure that they would be able to fulfil existing research grant commitments, and furloughing staff while the charity weathered the income drought.

Home working & social distancing

Despite all this, the charity has implemented some impressive changes during the lockdown period. Like many organisations, Kidney Research UK were ready and able to have their staff working at home from day one of lockdown, having prepared for homeworking eventualities over the past few years.

Social distancing meant that the charity had to get creative with some of their current campaigns, such as the Andy Cole Fund, and reinvent new ways to deliver the planned activities given the ongoing challenges. Read more [here](#).

Kidney Beam project

The project we want to celebrate here wasn't on any plan for Kidney Research UK, although it directly links to one of their strategic objectives; to do more to support the mental and physical health of those living with kidney disease.

Recognising that the mental and physical health needs of patients were greater than ever during the pandemic, Kidney Research UK in partnership with Kings College Hospital London, and a company called Beam, launched Kidney Beam.

Kidney Beam is a free online service for the kidney community. Through the platform, patients can choose from a range of live or recorded classes led by NHS kidney health professionals, and other qualified instructors including people living with kidney disease, initially including yoga, Pilates, high intensity training (HIIT), and other online sessions.

Identifying customer needs

The collaborative project developed content, tested, and launched the platform to patients in less than three months. Sandra Currie,

Chief Executive of Kidney Research UK, said when this opportunity was presented to her from Dr Sharlene Greenwood from King's College Hospital, she knew that the timing was perfect.

"Kidney patients need this type of service now to support them whilst they are shielding."

Delivering a large project

When asked how they delivered such a sizeable project so quickly, which involved creating content and liaising with colleagues in the UK, United States and Australia, Sandra said:

"We were able to be responsive without reducing the quality of our governance for such a big project. We just removed all time-consuming processes, had some immediate decision-making conversations, and did it more swiftly. It has led us to further challenge the way we do a number of things here and forced us to address why some things take so long."

Sandra also says "Beamify" has become a verb in Kidney Research UK for how to get things done quickly.

Staff satisfaction

In addition to the tremendously positive response from kidney patients, who love the platform, the project has also been a "lovely productive distraction" for the charity and a real feel-good project for everyone involved. Particularly at a time when there is a lot of uncertainty and worry in the sector.

A huge project success

In an additional stroke of genius, the charity merged their two biggest initiatives and had Andy Cole join a live Pilates session through the platform in order to promote it. We think you smashed it Andy! Watch the video [here](#).

As a research charity, Kidney Research UK are carefully monitoring the success of the Kidney Beam project and current funding takes the scheme up until November 2020. If early indications are anything to go by, they hope to extend the scheme if funds allow. If you can sponsor the next stage of the project or would like to donate to the pilot, then either visit the [Kidney Research UK website](#), or get in touch with Sandra by emailing chiefexecutiveoffice@kidneyresearchuk.org.

Kidney Research UK is a charity whose purpose is to:

- Prevent kidney disease by finding ways to see it coming and developing interventions to stop it happening
- End kidney failure by learning how to spot disease early, how to identify and slow down or stop progression, and how to reverse or repair kidney damage
- Transform treatments by making dialysis and transplantation more tolerable and effective, until better alternatives are available

Their vision is to free lives from the restrictions, fear, anxiety and life limiting nature of kidney disease. Visit their website [here](#).