

LYHA resident is a Frontline Star

Adele Rae, a resident of Leeds and Yorkshire Housing Association (LYHA) for 23 years, and a LYHA board member for the last five years, successfully made it to the shortlist for the HQN Frontline Stars Award. Passionate about community and resident involvement, she's also a tenant representative on the TPAS board.

Adele is Community Director of the Kirkstall Valley Development Trust (KVDT), which has ambitious plans to support people in the west Leeds area. This has included setting up a community hub, known as Unit 11, which provides a range of exciting community activities – everything from a library and community choir, to yoga, pilates, and 'stay and play' sessions for young families. (It's free for anyone to drop in – the kettle's always on!)

During the outbreak, Adele and her Kirkstall team have transformed Unit 11 into a Covid-19 support centre and food distribution base. She's worked tirelessly to help local residents who are vulnerable, elderly and/or living in poverty.

Chris Gill, Development KVDT Director, said: *“Adele co-founded the Trust with me back in 2016 with a dream to transform Kirkstall Valley. As Community Director, she led on building a team of 70 volunteers and 1,500 registered supporters from whom we raised £80,000 to kick start the creation of a community hub and farm.*

“In 2019 Adele managed to establish a base on Kirkstall Bridge Retail Park. With dangerous powers of persuasion, she kitted it out for next to nothing, creating a library, play area, café and events space. Just when community use was booming, the pandemic struck.

“Adele instantly turned the unit into a support centre for Kirkstall. She inspired 150 volunteers to deliver 300 food parcels and 600 prepared meals a week, keeping the unit open as a pay-what-you-can food bank, coordinating money and support from local partners and raising food from shops and take-aways. She would always insist it wasn't her, but the team, that did it. However, taking it from a standing start, nothing would have been achieved without her.”

Mark Pearson, LYHA Chief Executive, added: *“Adele has been integral to LYHA in helping us rebuild trust with our communities after a difficult couple of years.*

“She is full of ideas, support and challenge. She's been great to 'sense check' our Covid-19 response to supporting customers and always thinks of the communities in which we operate. In fact, I would describe her as 'a voice of the community' for us. She is committed, hardworking and always busy, as she is so dedicated to helping people in the community to live well and access whatever support and guidance they need.”

Rachel Reeves, MP for Leeds West, successfully nominated KVDT for a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque for their inspirational work during lockdown. She said: *“Only in its first year of operation, KVDT have taken on the role of volunteer community hub for Kirkstall during the coronavirus pandemic. They have worked extremely hard to support our community, and have gone above and beyond to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.”*