A day in the life of a young onset dementia support worker

When YoungDementia UK first started, individual support for people living with young onset dementia was identified as the most significant need. By matching people with support workers for a session a week, relationships were formed and flourished. Nearly 20 years later, we have ten support workers working across Oxfordshire supporting over 40 people on a weekly basis. Each relationship is unique. Here is a taster ...

Simon and Phil

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Phil - calls Simon ‘nesh’ for feeling the cold on their walks

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Liz and Liz

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According to Liz, 'the weather is always good on a Tuesday'

Then we go to a café for a drink and sit in the sun. We both enjoy gardening and plants, so we may visit a garden centre. Liz can't see the plants very well, but she can touch and smell them.

Sometimes Liz isn't in the mood for doing much when I arrive, but once we are out and about she is always cheerful and glad to have gone out. Our weekly meetings give her a chance to chat, a change of scene and something to look forward to. It contributes to the structure of her week and helps her keep a sense of time. When we are walking, we notice the seasons and really enjoy the small things, like the colour of leaves and the sound of ducks and geese.

We have known each other for well over two years now, and it's fair to say we have become very close.

What happens during support sessions?

A special feature of our individual support sessions is their variety. They revolve around members particular interests and needs, whether that might be sewing, singing, swimming or shopping, gardening, golf or even going to the dentist!

Paula supported Barbara to go swimming and her confidence has grown hugely. Recently Paula took round some knitting as she knew Barbara used to knit. They are now considering if Barbara might join a local knitting group.

Deborah accompanies Lesley to a singing group each week as she loves music.

Paul dislikes crowds and busy places so usually spends his support sessions with Simon walking the dog. However, recently they went to Oxford to buy a birthday present for Paul's wife. He enjoyed the trip and now wants to visit some other places.

Paul D and Simon H headed to Henley River & Rowing Museum whilst Tom D went with Chris to see 'Thriller' in Aylesbury, which he really enjoyed - he talked about it and sang all the way home.

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