

Making a Difference

Case study I

A couple who have benefited from the Lincolnshire Carers Service are Denise and Richard from the Spalding area.

Denise has cared for her husband, Richard, for three years following a serious stroke, leaving him with a number of care needs. Denise herself has a number of serious health issues, impacting on her own energy and mobility levels. Denise also supports her elderly parents, who live in a care home in Milton Keynes, whom she likes to visit every fortnight.

When Richard broke his arm, following a fall, Denise realised she was struggling to cope. The responding Community Paramedic told Denise about the Lincolnshire Carers Service, who could be of help.

Denise decided to get in touch. A Carer's Assessment was booked in with one of the Carers FIRST support and assessment co-ordinators. Denise was able to talk about her caring role, her own health worries and the exhausting pressures of driving a round trip to Milton Keynes to see her parents.

Although they have neighbours who help them, leaving Richard for any length of time was a worry for Denise. A 'Lifeline' pendant was put in place for her husband by the Wellbeing Service. Now Denise feels more confident to leave Richard for the day when visiting her parents.

The consequences of providing care for Richard combined with her own ill-health and other caring responsibilities meant Denise was increasingly unable to maintain their own home environment, which was in turn having an adverse impact on her own wellbeing. To help Denise feel less exhausted and relieve some pressure, she was awarded a Carer's Personal Budget, to provide practical help around the home and in the garden.



Richard was also concerned that the couple might not be receiving the correct level of pension benefits, and asked for some help. The Carers FIRST worker arranged for the couple to meet Carers FIRST's specialist Benefits Advisor, who carried out an initial telephone benefits check. This very knowledgeable and passionate Benefits Advisor quickly realised that something was wrong, and that he needed to see Denise and Richard in person to discuss their benefits and check their award notices.

With the consent of Denise and Richard, the Advisor contacted the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to discuss their case and resolve the outstanding issues. As a result of his expert intervention and advocacy, a new award and back payment was made to the couple by the DWP. The advisor concluded his work with a home visit to confirm that the final award notice from the DWP was correct.

Overall Denise and Richard have been delighted with the excellent support they have received from Carers FIRST. Richard said: "The service has been excellent, it has changed everything for us", while Denise's advice to other carers is: "Don't hesitate to contact the service, don't think they can't help you".

Case study 2

My role as a carer started some 8years ago at the age of 46 +when my wife was diagnosed with a pars fracture of her LS vertebrae. In short, the hooks that hold the nerves in place on her spine in this area are damaged; this in turn exposes the nerves to be aggravated causing severe pain in her lower back and throughout her legs.

The result of this is not paralysis but extreme difficulty with mobility. In addition to this, she is diagnosed with ME, FND (functional nerve disorder) fibro myalgia, lymphedema and other associated issues.

We both worked in a professional environment enjoying the fruits of our labour.....how things can change???

My life is now a 24hr a day care provider, standard and Constant day to day chores, constantly tending to my wife's needs (washing, bathing, cooking, help moving, administering pills and potions etc. etc. etc.) and only getting out of the house when outside agency carers arrive for 3 hours, 3 times a week. This time is spent shopping, collecting prescriptions, dog walking, house maintenance and any and all other things that also require my attention. In addition, bringing up two stepsons with all the grief that can cause.... In short, racing around, rushing and generally getting stressed as I need to get to my wife before carers leave ... a constant battle against the clock whilst only getting 4-5 hours sleep, if lucky per night.

I've been doing this for a number of years which had begun to take its toll on me without me realising. Constantly tired, snappy, irritable, stressed. Not leaving the house was sending me stir crazy, became quite insular, verging on, if not depressed and constantly on edge and venting all this on the people I loved, my family.... My life has been put on hold, constantly looking out for all around me, the weight of the world on my shoulders, and regularly, too regularly, shouting out what about ME I'd forgotten and ignored that all important person that didn't need help but did the typical man thing and coped.....badly.

Introducing the Adult Care Service

I can't honestly remember who contacted who, was I referred, did I contact them or they me, but what I do know I'm glad it happened, and here's why.

I was appointed an advisor who after a telephone interview, and like a dog with a bone, breaking through the "no man is a mountain" scenario got an open, honest and frank overview of the reality the effects of my situation were having on me....

An Emergency Response Service was initiated that in short, should anything happen to me whilst out and about happen, a simple call to central number initiates things like contacting carers, house entry, dietary and medication requirements etc. This was tailored to my situation and once put into place was a huge relief, I immediately relaxed and felt less stressed about the burden I'd always felt when leaving the house.

It may not sound a big deal, but it worked for me !!!

After the initial review and subsequent calls, I was asked a question ??? If I had the option, what would the best thing for me to get "me time" be, or get some relief from the strains I was feeling???

My response was anything, but years ago I played golf at a very competitive level, had a social life, got exercise and totally relaxed and had something to look forward too, good days but in the past.....

Further discussions, budget application, and subsequent approval, I had access to a fund that allowed me to play golf on a semi regular basis without worrying about care cover for my wife etc.

Result for me was dramatic, time away from the 24hr toil of the job I was doing, something to look forward too, some sort of social life and more importantly an outlet to relax and enjoy life again.

I truly believe this service saved my sanity, sense of wellbeing, arguably my marriage, certainly relationship with my boys and other family members and can't thank them enough.

Advice for those in a similar situation, remember this is a service to help YOU as a carer, and they have been the only service I have been in contact with that do actually HELP Be open, honest and swallow your pride and accept the help on offer....

Advice to the carers service, try and talk to the spouse, or person cared for as a matter of course, they may give a more honest appraisal of the situation from their point of view, it certainly helped in my case.

I don't leave reviews normally, this service worked and I'll say it again, thank you.