

Debbie and Elaine's story

Community Learning Disability Team

Key words

Well-being

Prevention

Who are telling the stories?

Elaine is a social worker in the community learning disability team.

Debbie is a lady who was referred to the team by her brother.

What was the situation?

Involvement began following a referral from Debbie's brother who was very concerned as Debbie's benefits had been stopped and her home environment had deteriorated significantly. He was worried her health and well-being was suffering and was unsure how to support her.

What mattered to Debbie?

What mattered most to Debbie's family initially was her home environment and her benefit income being suspended. Although Debbie was concerned about these things it was apparent, after spending time speaking with Debbie on her own, that her main concern related to being isolated, not having any meaningful activity and being very lonely. She felt her life had spiralled out of control and was unsure how to improve things.

What happened?

Debbie's brother agreed to take forward with Debbie a plan to improve her home environment.

Debbie's brother was provided contact details for the Carers Centre to provide benefit advice and support. They were able to take forward an appeal and support Debbie to have her benefits reinstated.

I spent time getting to know what Debbie wanted to change in her life. I referred her to a befriender and supported her to go visit a community centre where she could try jewellery making. Debbie then felt confident to continue to attend this centre without my support where she has now joined a number of groups and supports those less able than herself. She now feels valued and has a sense of purpose.

I maintained contact with Debbie and her family whilst these actions were undertaken to help build a relationship with them and establish exactly what mattered to them.

How does this link to the Social Services and Well-being Act?

A proportionate assessment was completed. Debbie was supported to access community services such as the STARS centre and Carers Centre to support her to meet her outcomes after establishing what was important to her. Debbie was supported to maintain her independence and choice making. Work was undertaken in a preventative way and Debbie did not require support from statutory services or managed care. If support was not provided at this stage it is likely things would have continued to deteriorate for Debbie and reach crisis, which could have resulted in the need for statutory services. Debbie was then closed to the Community Learning Disability Team as she was able to continue to access these services independently.

What was the impact on how I felt about my job?

It was an enjoyable piece of work to undertake. I was able to see changes in Debbie's confidence and self esteem over time which were really positive and rewarding to witness. It felt like I was able to make a positive difference in someone's life which is very motivating, although it was really Debbie who put in the hard work and I just gave her the information and a bit of support to do this.

Exercises for practitioners.

As an individual practitioner, or as a team, how do the stories help you reflect on your own practice and did it inspire you to do anything differently, no matter how small a change.

One of the best ways to support learning from stories is as a group. In the Magic Moments booklet, there are two reflective exercises you can follow. The first is around Exploratory Talk and provides an outline for how to run a session, with suggested questions. Take a look at pages 21-26 and use these as an outline for your own session

http://www.careforumwales.co.uk/uploads/MagicMoments_PDF.pdf

There are various techniques you can use, such as Community of Enquiry or Explanatory Talk to get teams to think about what they feel about the stories and what they have learned. You can find some simple guidance on how to do this on the helpful resources section of our webpages.