

Community Gateway

A Collection of Stories

Starting with a Conversation

“Thank you for listening to me and offering support - I didn’t know how much I needed you”

Faith

These short stories have been provided by the Community Gateway - find out more. These stories highlight the wide range of support the voluntary sector provides across Cornwall. They all have a common thread - they all start with a conversation and a listening ear.

Maggie

Guiding the Conversation

Last week, Helyn from the Community Gateway received a call from Maggie. Maggie was upset, confused and didn’t know where to turn.

Maggie lives out of the county and arranges care for Dad in Cornwall. She had just finished a phone call with the hospital, who informed Maggie that her Dad is having his treatment withdrawn and will now be receiving end of life care. Maggie was shocked and struggling to come to terms with this awful news.

Understandably, Maggie was very emotional and didn’t really know what to do next - her thoughts and questions were becoming muddled. She knew that her Dad would want to be at home and his passing would be easier if he had family around him. However, Maggie didn’t know if this was possible, didn’t know what to expect, was unsure of the level of care needed and couldn’t remember the conversation with the Doctor clearly.

After listening to Maggie, Helyn’s response was calm and assured, she asked if Maggie could explain the situation slowly, one step at a time. Helyn was able to draw on her own experiences and her experience as a Helpline coordinator - gently probing and ascertaining whether Maggie had all the details she needed.

Following the conversation, it became very clear that Maggie was making many assumptions about her Dad’s health. Helyn, carefully explained that every person is different and that it might not be practical or advisable to get her Dad home - they agreed that the most important thing was to make sure her Dad was comfortable, not in pain and had the best support around him.

It was also clear that Maggie needed another conversation with his Doctor - Maggie had an appointment to speak with the Doctor later that afternoon.

Helyn helped Maggie develop a list of questions that she wanted to ask. It was unlikely that Maggie will travel to Cornwall, so Maggie needed to be able to see (and speak) to her Dad remotely. Helyn discussed how she could communicate with him face to face - asking if Maggie could contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) to see if she could send photos & messages.

Following their conversation, Maggie was much calmer and had a sense of purpose and a plan. *“Everything you told me makes sense now, I can see things more clearly. Thank you for sharing your experience, it was really helpful knowing that you could relate to my situation and understand”*

Faith

You Matter to us

Initially, Faith contacted Kerstin (Gateway) as she wanted the number for Cornwall Council’s refuse collection service. Her request was simple, yet her tone suggested so much more.

Faith sounded extremely stressed, spoke rapidly, and was frustrated at not being able to sort out simple tasks.

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What followed, was a guided conversation with Faith. Kerstin listened to her concerns, talked about her wellbeing and offered advice.

Faith is disabled, lonely, worried about her finances and generally “fed-up”. She had no one to talk to and wasn’t in contact with her family. It became clear that Kerstin had to wrap support around Faith - ensuring we could alleviate her concerns.

Since the first conversation, we have spoken to [an Information and Advice advisor](#), who has put in a benefit referral - an initial check showed that Frances had a clear entitlement.

Kerstin also spoke to Volunteer Cornwall, who have contacted a local volunteer who is connecting with Faith via a telephone befriending service. They have also arranged a range of social activities for Faith, where she can meet people with similar interests.

Faith also mentioned how she struggled with her weight, and had tried many times to lose weight, “I feel like a failure”, which caused further anxiety and depression. Therefore, we connected her to Age UK Cornwall’s Step into Wellness sessions - ***Faith is joining the digital café next week to meet others and enjoy armchair yoga. We hope this is the first step of many.***

I am so happy that you phoned. I had no idea that I would be able to get all this support.

Edward

Linking people to Voluntary support

Edward recently called the Gateway and asked if he could get some help at home. Edward is recently bereaved and was finding most aspects of his life challenging.

A conversation with the Gateway highlighted that Edward was recently discharged from Hospital, financially secure, and mobile.

Our first priority was to connect Edward with local cleaning service and Age UK Cornwall’s gardening service - ***but when speaking with Edward, it became apparent that he had no one to talk to and was becoming increasingly lonely, adding another priority, we linked him to the [Listening Ear Bereavement Telephone service](#) and completed the referral for Age UK Cornwall’s cleaning service. The Gateway explained that the cleaning service would also provide companionship and friendly ear whenever he needed it.***

Edward declined our offer of online wellbeing sessions, as he was not interested in IT, but he was very happy to be connected to [Man Down](#) and [Active Plus Veteran Support Services](#).

Contact us

The Community Gateway provides a single point of access to a range of voluntary sector support and services.

Call 0187 266383

or email - gateway@ageukcornwall.org.uk

