

# Community Stories

## Edith's Story

### Remaining Independent for Longer



***“Edith has gone from having barely any support, feeling lonely and isolated, and not realising there is anyone to help, to having a strong support network around her.” Amy***



Edith's Story is written by Amy Osborne, Age UK Cornwall Community Wellbeing Coach.

Following this conversation, I contacted Edith's Daughter, Linda.

Her story shows the importance of a coach's role in the community. A key part of this role is allowing an individual to be seen, heard and listened to, helping improve their wellbeing, quality of life, and remain independent for longer.

***Linda explained that these are recurrent delusional thoughts that Edith has had over the last two years. Edith strongly believes that she is moving to be with her family, but this isn't the case. Linda has been unsure how to help her Mum, but I reassured her that we could work together to find additional support that was the best fit for her needs. I also checked that she was working with a Dementia Practitioner and spoke to them to gain more information regarding available support.***

## ***Edith's Story***

Edith is in her nineties and lives alone. Edith has moderate dementia which can lead to increased confusion and anxiety. Edith gets occasional help from a neighbour, but her family live in Scotland, which means that she only sees them when they are visiting and is unable to leave the house independently.

At the end of the conversation, I asked Edith if I could visit her at home to see all of the books she had written - she really liked the idea of this - so I arranged to visit the following week.

We received a referral from Adult Social Care. Edith manages her own personal care and didn't qualify for a care package, but she still needed help to improve her physical and mental wellbeing - this is where Age UK Cornwall came in...

The home visit really showed me a true picture of how Edith was living. Edith wasn't coping very well at home as the housework was getting on top of her, there were many things on the floor that could be a trip hazard.

## ***Connecting with Edith***

I made initial contact by telephone and introduced myself. I explained my role and Edith was happy to chat. Edith explained that she was an Author, so we had a lengthy chat about the books she had published. I listened to her interests and spoke about her favourite books and genres.

We sat in the lounge where she showed me a piano alongside her collection of books. Edith shared happy memories of singing whilst her Dad played the Piano. I told Edith about the Happy Voices Singing Group (that happens at Govenek, Newquay Hub) but she said she didn't have time as she needed to box everything up for the move. I acknowledged the distress this might be causing her right now and tried to gently offer an alternative thought, explaining that moving takes a long time, so maybe we could look into what she'd like to do in the meantime, she said maybe.

However, Edith kept steering the conversation towards moving house tomorrow. She also said that people were coming into her home and making a mess, rearranging things so she would forget where they were.

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### ***Finding the right solutions***

Edith looked out her window and said that her garden was getting her down. So, I asked if I could source a gardener and home help as she is busy writing her books. She looked surprised and said, "I didn't realise there were people that could help me, I'm so far away from home and my family" I reassured Edith that I was here to help and that we would work together to see how we can make positive changes if she'd like to do so.

**I also noticed Edith's toenails were getting very long, which could have a negative impact on her health. With Linda's support, I arranged a mobile foot clinic visit.**

Additionally, I contacted an Admiral Dementia Nurse for advice regarding Edith's delusional thoughts. She offered a solution and suggested that if the housework was in order it might not trigger the thought that someone is coming in and making the place untidy. Hopefully, this would lead to Edith being less distressed. The Nurse also explained the technology available to help people living alone with dementia. We also felt that doing a taster session at the Newquay Hub would be extremely beneficial, especially if Linda could join her during her next visit.

**Linda also explained that she finds it quite difficult emotionally to cope with her mum's symptoms, so I also provided a helpline number that supports families and carers living with dementia.**

### ***Positive Results***

There have been several positive results - **I managed to arrange an assessment with the Active Living Support team whilst Linda was visiting. This was successful and an Active Living Support Assistant and Gardner have now been set up for Edith. Edith now looks out her window with a smile, knowing that her garden is going to be rejuvenated.**

**Linda also feels a lot better now that there is someone able to help her mum every week and check in. Hopefully, in time, it will also support with her delusional thoughts and anxiety.**

**Linda now has options for different supportive resources, she feels ready to help herself and her mum going forward. They are already discussing useful technological solutions to ensure the distance between them becomes less of a barrier.**

Whilst Linda was visiting, we also arranged a taster day at the Newquay Hub, Linda was worried that Edith would change her mind on the day. I reassured her that it was okay and provided understanding as we will always respect an individual's choice to do or not to do something. Edith also managed to see the mobile foot clinic, and with the help of an Active Living Support Assistant will make sure there aren't any trip hazards in walkways to prevent future falls.

**Linda and Edith, were very appreciative of the services provided and thanked me for my support.**

**Written by Amy Osborne, Age UK Cornwall Community Wellbeing Coach.**

