

Following a Breast Cancer diagnosis, Barbara called the Age UK Cornwall Helpline in late 2021.

Barbara was searching for information on Support Groups in her local area. Following, a conversation with Dawn on the Helpline, Barbara was referred to the Age UK Cornwall Macmillan Team.

Her story has been provided by Ellen Stephens, Age UK CIOS Macmillan Navigator.

## Providing a Listening Ear

### First conversations

We first spoke to Barbara just before she was about to start her Radiotherapy treatment. This was following Chemotherapy & a subsequent operation. Our Helpline provided her with information on the Macmillan Cancer Support Services and she was happy to receive a phone call to discuss these support options further.

When I first contacted Barbara, she had completed her Radiotherapy and was still very tired. Barbara was starting to go out for short walks when her energy levels and the weather permitted.

We had a long conversation regarding her diagnosis and the support she received. Most of her support came from The Cove and their 'wonderful' counselling support service. Barbara had been put in touch with a Breast Cancer support group in

Hayle - subsequently attending one of their monthly meetings.

Barbara found this meeting really helpful and will continue attending, however, **Barbara also told me that she had been feeling very lonely since her diagnosis and would like the opportunity to talk to others more than once a month.**

***I felt sure that I could present Barbara with a wide range of choices.***

Together, we discussed the possibility of other options available via Macmillan's online community. However, Barbara said that she didn't really like using technology and used her Smart-phone sporadically. I also mentioned accessing Digital Inclusion Cornwall - which can help teach people the basics of tech and open up a world of opportunities. However, we decided to put the technology discussion on the back burner until Barbara was ready - ***instead, we focused the conversation (and several future conversations) on Barbara's loneliness and how we might be able to meet her needs.***



## Loneliness can Impact us all Regaining Independence

Barbara has felt lonely for a long time. She has an 18-year-old son who lives with her, but he is busy completing a college course and has a part-time job that takes up a lot of his time. Barbara has some friends locally, but they also have work commitments and their own families to look after. **Most importantly, Barbara says that she doesn't want to be a burden on anyone.**

**Barbara wanted something that would give her the chance to meet new people with similar interests - she wanted to gain back a bit of her independence and have more choices in her life.** We discussed what interests she had and if she would be interested in joining any local hobby clubs. I found out if any meetings or groups could be in person rather than online. Slowly but surely, I introduced Barbara to Cornwall Link and how she might find more options online. We agreed during our next conversation that we would compare our searches.

*“Cornwall Link was similar to how I use Google, so I will give it a go”*  
**Barbara**

During that conversation, we researched what groups were out there that may be of interest to Barbara. **We came across a photography workshop which was happening the following week. Barbara seemed really excited about this and we booked the session.** During our conversation, it also transpired that she actually uses FaceBook to keep connected.

*“Maybe, I am not as much of a ‘dinosaur’ with technology as I thought”*

When it came to researching groups, this changed our process considerably.

Following some more research, I called Barbara back to share the groups that I thought she may be interested in. I even showed her how I had found them via FaceBook and the local group pages. Whilst we were speaking on the phone, Barbara sent out a request to join the group to look for further information on her own.

Barbara was excited about the opportunity to do this for herself, saying that it was nice that she didn't have to rely on others.

**In only a short space of time, Barbara has gone on a journey of self-discovery, finding new support, connected to like-minded groups and has regained independence. We are so proud of Barbara and what she has achieved to date.**

