

“The support from my Link Worker has been so helpful. She has opened doors for me, which has led to a huge sense of relief. I can now see the light at the end of the tunnel.”



Gerald - a Case Study

Gerald was referred to Age UK Cornwall Social Prescribing services via Adult Social Care. Initially, Gerald requested Social Welfare Advice. After an initial conversation with a Social Prescribing Link Worker (SPLW), it became apparent that Gerald's needs were far more complex than anticipated.

Gerald had been diagnosed with a chronic autoimmune disorder, which resulted in weakness of the skeletal muscles. His condition affected the voluntary muscles of the body. Especially those that control his eyes, mouth, throat and limbs.

In addition to this, he had type 2 diabetes, mild hearing loss, epilepsy and acute back pain. Gerald had also separated from his partner and slept on his sofa, which was affected his back and sleep. He also had great difficulties in reading and writing.

Gerald had already contacted Citizen's Advice, as he had issues with some outstanding loans - with debt building up. He desperately needed help and advice around housing, debt, benefits and dealing with his newly diagnosed condition.

Supporting Gerald's needs

After a series of guided conversations with the Social Prescribing Link Worker, Gerald identified the following needs:

- ✓ **help to apply for housing**
- ✓ help with understanding and coping with the physical and mental effects of his newly diagnosed condition



✓ **advice and help required for loans, benefits and debt issues.**

✓ support with IT, to help with social isolation. It was noted that a larger device, as well as accessibility solutions for Gerald's smartphone, would help with the deterioration in eyesight.

✓ **find suitable Software and solutions for someone who could not read/write well.**

✓ Gerald was also keen to learn to read/write, so the right IT support would be essential to assist with this. The Social Prescribing Link worker also noted that voice assisted technology could be challenging, as Gerald's speech fluctuated throughout the day.

Social Prescribing Making a difference

“Gerald’s well being scores (SWEMWBS) over the past 6 months have increased three fold! At the start of the support his well being scores were 9 in total. When we discussed how he now feels, his total score is 27.”



Actions taken

- ✓ **A referral was made to the HomeGroup, who could provide a Support Worker, who could assist with a Home Choice application and paperwork around benefits.**
- ✓ The SPLW registered the patient onto a website and associated support, which helps and supports patients with Gerald’s condition. The website has a special application, which reads out the web pages and does not prevent the patient from accessing the information.
- ✓ **A referral was made to Christians Against Poverty (CAP) who would assist with debt advice.**
- ✓ The SPLW arranged follow up support from a Community Coach (Inclusion Matters) in East Cornwall.

Successful outcomes

Gerald remained with our SPLW for many months, especially as the COVID situation eased and work regarding his housing requests and benefits went forward.

Gerald has struggled physically, with some of his symptoms, **but following some small changes with his medication from the GP, his condition appears to have stabilised.**

After many months of working alongside the HomeGroup, **Gerald is now living independently in his own home.** His support worker continues to visit him each week to see how he is and to ensure that he’s OK with all the changes that have taken place - Gerald has never lived alone before!

His benefits are still in the process of changing, but things are far more settled than before. His children do visit him regularly and provide some support where needed. A family member is now assisting with regular cleaning and shopping - when Gerald requires this support.

Following our referral, **Gerald is now being supported by CAP, who are assisting with his historical debts and finance issues.**

The SPLW has also approached Cornwall Council and is working alongside Digital Inclusion Cornwall, who are hoping to **provide Gerald with the right IT equipment to meet his needs. This will help him move forward in training and improve his communication methods.** It is also hoped that the tablet will ease his sense of isolation, which may worsen during the winter months when Gerald is unable to get out of his home.

The Community Coach is visiting next week, to carry out a “handover” of support with the HomeGroup. **The SPLW will continue to provide help until Gerald has received his IT equipment and training is arranged.**

Social Prescribing

*Social Prescribing is a method of linking people with non-clinical sources of support within the community. Age UK Cornwall have dedicated Link Workers, who work within primary care networks, and provide 1:1 personalised support to people across Cornwall. **Our aim is to empower people to take control of their health and wellbeing, by giving time to focus on ‘what matters to me’.***