

OUR SOCIAL IMPACT



Case studies in Independent Living Co-ordination

Social prescribing and person-centred care are buzzwords associated with the health and social care sector's increasing understanding of the benefits the voluntary sector can bring to service delivery.

But what should social prescribing look like in practice? What work should it feature?

At Age UK Sheffield, we have been delivering holistic, person-centred support to people aged 50 and over for many years.

Our experience has taught us that simply referring people to exercise sessions or counselling is rarely effective. Only by using guided conversations to scratch beneath the surface and fully understand all the economic, social and health-related issues affecting a person can you maximise your impact in improving social outcomes and reduce long-term effects on the health and social care system.

Our ILC service undertakes a long-term link officer role based on essential features of:

- An initial 2-3 hour guided conversation to fully understand their needs and aspirations
- Co-ordinating services and resources around the needs of the individual, putting the person first and empowering them to achieve their aspirations for later life
- Understanding that support for carers and family members may be integral to the independence of the individual
- Building independence, control and support networks so that when our service ends, the person is ready and empowered to continue living well
- Continuing to be available to provide support if the person's circumstances change after our service ends

Best outcomes for all

Evaluations of our service have consistently found our support has:

1. Improved financial outcomes, through maximising claimed benefits
2. Improved physical health, through advocating for aids and adaptations and connections to local community health services
3. Improved social connections – on average, ILCs made over nine referrals to local services, resources and activities per client
4. As a result of all the above, improved mental wellbeing

Highly skilled staff

Our ILC team is recruited for their absolute commitment to the independence and empowerment of older people. They go the extra mile for the people they work with.

A flexible and professional service

We've delivered numerous specific projects through our ILC service, including:

- Being one of nine local sites for Age UK's national Integrated Care Pilot
- Also delivering Age UK's Wellbeing Co-ordination Pilot
- Delivering NHS England's Integrated Personal Commissioning pilot within Sheffield
- Floating housing support for people at risk of becoming homeless

Through our ILC service and its embedded ethos, we have been delivering holistic, person-centred support for years. With the increasing focus on social prescribing we hope to bring these benefits to Sheffield's health and social care system for years into the future.

Customer name	“Sue”
Service	Benefits At Home
Keywords	Mental health, long-term conditions, debts

Case study summary

Sue was living in debt, and suffering from physical and mental ill health. She phoned Age UK Sheffield on recommendation from a friend. Sue was supported to claim benefits that cleared her debts and provided her with a weekly income, providing hope for an improvement in her mental wellbeing.

About the person

Sue had been the victim of some abuse and has significant mental health issues including anxiety, depression, memory problems and a tendency to an erratic lifestyle and self-neglect. Sue also lives with health problems (COPD and heart problems). She didn't go out very much apart from talking to neighbours. With little family support as they do not live in Sheffield, she had been letting things get on top of her. Although she didn't want to admit it, she had become overwhelmed with debt, buying things on credit that she didn't need in an attempt to make herself feel better.

What was the situation?

Sue was referred to Age UK Sheffield by a neighbour who was concerned for her welfare. Her main concerns were around debt and, although she had received Attendance Allowance forms, she was overwhelmed by the form and decided not to fill it in.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

Our ILC supported Sue to apply for Attendance Allowance, which was awarded at the higher rate of £83.10 per week (£4,300 per year), plus £2,400 back pay. This amount enabled Sue to totally clear her debts.

She was now eligible to apply for Pension Credit. This was quickly awarded at £62.45 per week, with a back-dated lump sum of £2,200. The ILC also gave Sue advice on how to manage her money.

What outcomes were achieved?

In total, Sue received £4,582 in lump sums and an increase in income of £7,568 per year. Her debts were completely paid off and she could start to see a future where her mental health could improve.

Feedback

I felt like I wasn't being judged and ended up telling her things I hadn't even shared with my friends. I am debt free and I have an income which means I can live more comfortably. I can afford to visit my family and stay with them sometimes, and can pay to get some help in to my home.

Customer name	“Iris and Stan”
Service	Cancer support
Keywords	Cancer, low income, cold home

Case study summary

Iris and Stan are both in poor health and dependent upon each other for support. They were struggling to manage on their low income. Following our support, their income increased by over £18,000 per year and they are able to pay for the support they need.

About the person

Iris is 78 years old and lives with her partner Stan in social housing. She has lung cancer and severe breathing difficulties. Stan has angina, tremors and very poor mobility himself. They rely on each other for support and contacted our service as they were struggling to manage on their very limited income and were worrying about affording their heating bills.

What was the situation?

Our Independent living Co-ordinator (ILC) visited the couple at home and discovered a number of issues affecting their wellbeing including:

- Difficulties paying their rent
- Problems getting their rubbish bins out for collection
- Difficulties access local facilities
- Concerns that their home would not be suitable for them as their health deteriorated.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

Our ILC visited the couple at home several times to link them up to appropriate support, including the assisted bin collection service, provided information on equipment to help them maintain their independence and completed a full benefit check and supported them both to apply for Attendance Allowance. Our ILC applied for underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance, as they were caring for each other, which enabled them to apply for Pension Credit with our support.

What outcomes were achieved?

- Both Iris and Stan received Attendance Allowance at the higher rate, totalling £8,500pa
- Carer's Allowance and Pension Credit were also awarded, totalling £6,300pa
- They also received Housing Benefit and Council Tax support
- In total, the annual increase in income was £18,023.72, enabling them to keep them home warm and pay for support services to help them maintain their independence.
- Arranged for their rubbish bins to be collected reducing the risk of falls
- Completed registration with their Utility priority services to ensure their gas/electricity supply is not interrupted reducing the risk of a cold home environment
- Provided information on equipment to enable Stan to carry and hold drinks without spilling them reducing the risk of burns
- Completed blue badge applications which were awarded to them both giving them easier and safer access to local facilities improving their sense of wellbeing.

Customer name "Enid"
Service GP referral
Keywords Poor mobility, falls prevention, social isolation

Case study summary

Enid had suffered several falls and had not been out of the house for eight months. With Age UK Sheffield help to access strengthening exercises and falls prevention support, she is now back to collecting her own pension from the Post Office each week.

About the person

Enid is 85 and living alone in her own property. She did not have children and her siblings have passed away. Enid was struggling to mobilise due to arthritis, sciatica and breathing problems and she had experienced several falls. She was reliant on her neighbours for shopping and collecting her pension and she had not been out of the house for eight months. She felt lonely and was angry that she couldn't do the things she used to enjoy.

What was the situation?

Our Independent Living Co-ordinator visited Enid at her home to discuss her concerns. She identified a number of issues affecting Enid's ability to maintain her independence including; decline in physical and mental health, social isolation and a reliance on one neighbour.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

We supported Enid to manage her physical health, including chairbics exercises and falls prevention information. We also referred Enid for a bed lever and stairlift, provided information on social groups and transport solutions, and carried out a full benefits check and energy price comparison.

What outcomes were achieved?

- Enid is now in receipt of higher rate Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit Guarantee which has increased her income by £108.07 per week.
- She is also in receipt of Council Tax Support which has saved her £15.92 per week.
- She is now on the best energy tariff for her consumption and is saving over £100 per year and is in receipt of the Warm Home Discount saving £140 per year on her energy.
- Enid is registered with Sheffield Community Transport so can travel independently.
- She is considering attending social groups when the weather improves and has the contact details to organise this.
- Enid has been undertaking the chairbics exercises in her home and the risk of falls has been reduced. She now feels confident to walk to the local Post Office to collect her pension without having to be reliant on her neighbour.
- Enid has also had a bed lever and stair lift installed in the property and risk of falls has been further reduced.
- She no longer feels worried about bogus callers and cold calls to the house.
- Enid feels like she is once again living independently and has all the support she needs to do this.

Customer name	“Mrs Lime”
Service	Benefits at Home
Keywords	Low income, social isolation, dementia, mobility impairment

Case study summary

Mrs Lime’s poor mobility meant she could not get out of the house without her daughter’s help. Age UK Sheffield supported her to get out and about and claim £9,000 per year in additional benefits, significantly boosting her confidence and ability to live independently.

About the person

Mrs Lime’s husband and daughter went into the Information and Advice centre at Age UK Sheffield to ask if there was any help available, as Mrs Lime has health problems which significantly impair her mobility and her husband has dementia. Mrs Lime was physically unable to get into the shop and as such was referred through to the Reaching Communities/Benefits at Home team for a home visit.

What was the situation?

Mrs Lime was depressed due to being stuck in the house, having had her application for a blue badge turned down. The family was also struggling to manage on a low income whilst living with long-term health conditions.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

- Supported Mrs Lime with applications for Attendance Allowance, housing benefit, council tax benefit, pension credit and an energy grant
- Appealed the decision to turn down their application for a blue badge
- Referred Mrs Lime to Sheffield Community Transport
- Referred Mrs Lime for home adaptations to enable the couple to live more safely at home
- Provided information on topics including falls prevention, wills and Power of Attorney

What outcomes were achieved?

- Successful benefits applications meant the couple’s income increased by £9,000pa
- Successfully appealed against the blue badge decision

Feedback

“Now I can get out with my daughter to see friends and do my own shopping again which is fantastic and makes me feel so much better. When my daughter isn’t available, I have managed to get out independently for the first time in a couple of years, which has been such a boost to my confidence.”

Customer name	“Larry”
Service	Cancer support
Keywords	Cancer, falls prevention, increased benefits

Case study summary

Larry and Margaret were worried about their long-term health conditions, and their effects on their ability to live safely at home. With Age UK Sheffield support, all their home support needs were quickly met, and they are receiving £10,000 per year in additional benefits.

About the person

Larry is 78 and living with incurable lung and bladder cancer. He lives with his 76-year-old wife Margaret in a housing association house. They both have severe difficulties with their mobility and rely on each other for support.

What was the situation?

Our ILC found that the couple could not access their bath. Larry was also putting his health at risk every time he went up the stairs because of the severe breathlessness it causes him. They had been assessed by the local council for a wet room but did not know when this would be installed, and needed help to get a stair lift installed too. They contacted Age UK Sheffield as they just didn't know who could help with this.

In addition to their concerns about living safely at home, our ILC identified fears over the cost of heating their home, inability to park near to local facilities, worries around affording increasing health related costs and anxieties about nuisance calls they were receiving.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

Our ILC carried out a full benefits check and supported Larry and Margaret with the application process. She also liaised with Sheffield City Council and the local GP to address the couple's concerns about the wet room and stair lift.

What outcomes were achieved?

- The couple were awarded an additional £194.80 per week Pension Credit (£10,129.60 per annum), reducing their anxieties around managing their finances and meeting their increased health related costs
- Larry was awarded an additional £200 towards his heating costs via a Macmillan Grant reducing the risks to his health from a cold home environment
- The couple were refunded £430 that they had overpaid on their rent because they did not know the correct payment amount they had to pay
- Larry was awarded a blue badge and he is now able to access his local community reducing the risk of falls/deterioration in his breathing
- Larry was measured for a proper walking stick and now uses this to steady himself reducing the risk of falls
- The nuisance sales calls have been reduced via the registration with the Telephone Preference Service reducing the risk of falls and anxiety these calls caused them both
- The couple were informed of the date for the installation of the wet room reducing their anxieties over whether this would happen. They are now able to bath safely
- The referral to the Local Authority for a stair lift was successful. Our ILC liaised with the Local Authority and Stair Lift Company to ensure it was installed as quickly as possible.

The couple are now able to access the whole of their home safely and the risks to their health and wellbeing have been significantly reduced

Customer name	“Susan”
Service	Information and Advice
Keywords	Personal care, low income

Case study summary

Susan’s independence was being affected by her worries about getting washed and dressed. Age UK Sheffield’s Information and Advice service helped her to improve her income to get help at home, and an alarms service to give her confidence in case of a fall.

About the person

Susan had been experiencing difficulty with bending to get washed and dressed and moving around indoors, with particular problems getting in and out of the bath. Sue was feeling very frustrated about her mobility, which she felt was restricting her independence. She said that she felt ‘really fed up’, about not being able to manage as she wanted to.

What was the situation?

Susan’s difficulties in the bathroom were her main worry. Her knees were so painful and difficult to move that she was really concerned about getting stuck if she used the bath. It appeared that Sue may be eligible for Attendance Allowance so an appointment was made for her to come into the office where she was helped to complete an application.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

- We carried out a full benefits check for Susan
- We also provided her with information about various Council services she may benefit from, including an alarms service in case she fell

What outcomes were achieved?

- Susan’s claim for Attendance Allowance was successful and she was awarded the higher rate which was backdated.
- Susan hadn’t previously thought about alarms services and she felt that it was a great solution to something that had been worrying her. The touch of a button meant she could keep her independence, but be confident that help would be there if she needed it.

Feedback

Susan has said that she feels much happier about her situation and is planning to use the money from her Attendance Allowance award to get out and about more and to pay for any help she might need at home. She said that she will be singing Age UK’s praises to everyone and is so glad that she took her friends advice to speak to us.

Customer name "Ronnie"
Service Wellbeing Centre
Keywords Dementia, carer support

Case study summary

Ronnie lives with dementia and was becoming socially isolated. His wife Betty was becoming more and more exhausted supporting him. Ronnie's family found our Wellbeing Centre; his twice-weekly visits are great for him and provide much-needed respite for Betty.

About the person

Ronnie is 78 years old and was diagnosed with dementia five years ago. He has poor mobility and is hard of hearing. He lives with his wife, Betty, who is his main carer. He and Betty get additional support from their daughter Vicky, who he is particularly close to.

What was the situation?

Vicky contacted Age UK Sheffield in to enquire about a place for Ronnie at the Wellbeing Centre. She was becoming increasingly concerned for his wellbeing and for the situation at home. Ronnie is unable to leave the house unaccompanied and therefore was spending more and more time in his bungalow without seeing anyone other than family. Vicky informed us that Ronnie used to be a very social and active man which added to his frustration. She was worried he was becoming lonely and socially isolated. Betty was also struggling at home. She supports Ronnie with his medication, clothes and food but was becoming more and more exhausted.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

Ronnie and Vicky visited the Wellbeing Centre and were impressed by the activities and the atmosphere. Ronnie began attending on a Friday with members who had similar interests; music (particularly Frank Sinatra), singing and sports. He warmed to the other members and felt he could discuss his concerns and worries of his dementia diagnosis. Ronnie, Vicky and Betty all felt a positive impact from him attending the Wellbeing Centre.

What outcomes were achieved?

Ronnie now attends on a Monday and Friday. He loves reminiscing about Sheffield and looking at maps and old photographs. Ronnie has always been a musical man but had had some time away from singing and playing his cornet. Since attending the Wellbeing Centre he has brought in his cornet and performed to other members and now joins in the spontaneous sing-a-longs. He has engaged with past interests and has also discovered new ones such as baking.

He has a great sense of humour and clearly enjoys making jokes and socialising with other members. Attending the Wellbeing Centre has given him back some of his independence and kept him socially active. As well as the visible benefits for Ronnie, the Wellbeing Centre has also given Betty some respite throughout the week which has helped make life better for all the family.

Customer name "Najma"
Service Benefits At Home
Keywords Foreign national, low income, poor health

Case study summary

Najma had to visit India every year to access her only independent source of income, her late husband's pension. But when illness prevented her from making her annual visit, she was left without any income, and with increasing health needs.

About the person

Over recent years Najma's health has deteriorated and her family were struggling to look after her. Her daughter is a member of Friends of Age UK Sheffield, so she knew to get in touch for our support.

What was the situation?

Najma was completely reliant on her family financially. She is not entitled to a UK pension as she moved from India to live with her daughter and son-in-law after retirement age. Her only independent income was a portion of her late husband's pension from the Indian government. She had to visit India once a year to attend a bank in person to collect this and normally stayed to visit relatives for a few months. Due to hospitalisation from heart problems and increasing frailty and mobility problems from arthritis, she was unable to make this trip in the winter of 2016/17.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

Our ILC had to do a great deal of research into Najma's eligibility for benefits due to her migrant status, and the amount of time she had spent out of the country. Whilst Najma qualified for Attendance Allowance due to her health and support needs, she first of all needed support to apply for a National Insurance number and attend an interview.

Our ILC also researched other health-related support which Najma may benefit from.

What outcomes were achieved?

Najma received Attendance Allowance of £83.10 per week (£4,300 per year). We also arranged for her to receive dental treatment at home and a wheelchair to enable her to get out and about better.

Feedback

"The ILC service has made a big difference to me, and I would advise others to seek their support. Even though it took a full 6 months and a number of visits to sort this out for me, the ILC supported me throughout and I don't believe any other service could have done this."

Customer name "Benny"
Service GP referral
Keywords Kidney disease, carer support

Case study summary

Benny's health conditions were significantly affecting his mental wellbeing, and impacting on Janet, his wife and carer. With Age UK Sheffield support, their living conditions and financial situation improved, reducing their likelihood of unnecessary health deterioration.

About the person

Benny is 51 years old and lives with his wife Janet. He has stage 5 kidney disease and needs dialysis at his local hospital four times a week. He also has anaemia. Janet cares for him as best as she can but she has chronic arthritis and insulin-dependent diabetes so is not in great health herself. Benny feels very low and is often tearful.

What was the situation?

Benny was sleeping on a single bed in his living room; he experiences very loose stools as a side effect of dialysis and regularly soils himself. Janet has to support him to change the bedding and to clean himself. They live in a very small flat so this room was cluttered and the furniture did not fit in properly. There was also an unpleasant odour coming from the bed.

Benny did not go out much any more as he worried about not being able to access toilet facilities when he needed to. This extended to accessing community health services and he had not seen an optician in many years.

The couple worried about money and were particularly concerned about paying their fuel. Benny also worried about the impact on Janet of caring for him. She struggles with her own health and was finding it difficult to prepare meals and to get to the shops due to her arthritis. She missed her own health appointments when Benny was unwell.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

By rapidly establishing open discourse and trust, between an Age UK Sheffield Independent Living Coordinator (ILC) and Benny, the struggles and difficulties he was experiencing were identified. Assistance was then given to enable Benny to manage his physical health and finances and get back in control of his life.

The ILC role includes: problem-solving, researching solutions, acting as advocate, accessing benefits advice, support planning, sign-posting and facilitated access to peer and professional support, and social contact. ILCs are expected to be creative, resourceful and 'think out of the box' as they challenge prevalent misconceptions and low expectations.

What outcomes were achieved?

- Benny was supported to apply to a local charity for a replacement bed and mattress and also for a smaller table and chairs to free up more space in the living room. These were delivered free to the property within a week. Additionally Benny was supported to source waterproof under sheets for the bed to avoid any soiling of the new mattress. Both Benny and Janet felt that their enjoyment of their home was significantly improved as they had more space in their living area and there was no longer any odour from the bed.

- Age UK Sheffield supported him to apply for Personal Independent Payments and he was awarded an additional £300 every four weeks. This meant that Benny and Janet did not have to worry about their heating bills and that Janet could afford to use a taxi to shop for food.
 - Benny was referred to a home visiting optician. This meant that any eyesight deterioration could be addressed before it became serious thus saving the NHS money.
 - Benny was supported to apply for a free Just Can't Wait continence card. As a result he felt more confident when going out.
 - Benny and Janet were sent information on local frozen and hot meal delivery services. As a result Benny and Janet would still be able to maintain a good level of nutrition, even on the days they were very unwell.
 - Janet was supported to re-arrange a hospital appointment she had cancelled due to Benny's health.
-

Customer name	"Joan"
Service	Cancer support
Keywords	Carer support, falls prevention, poor housing, low income, social isolation

Case study summary

Joan was struggling to manage at home following the death of her husband. With our ILC's support, she is now living safely at home, getting out and about, and is financially better off.

About the person

Joan was referred to us by her friend who was concerned she was not managing following the death of her husband from lung cancer. Joan had very poor mobility and could not get out to do her shopping. Her friend was worried she would be completely isolated as she didn't have any family and her friend could only visit her occasionally.

What was the situation?

Our ILC visited Joan at home and identified a number of barriers to her wellbeing including:

- Risk of falls when moving around her home
- Difficulties getting up and down her stairs to the toilet and accessing bathing facilities
- Her home was in a poor state of repair
- Inability to get out and do her shopping and manage her home environment
- Limited income and social isolation.

The ILC noticed Joan was dishevelled and there was evidence that she was not sleeping upstairs as her clothing, toiletries and bedding were all in her lounge. Joan told our ILC that she had relied upon her husband for support for many things. She was struggling to manage her personal care due to the difficulties she had getting upstairs.

What did Age UK Sheffield do to make a difference?

- Supported Joan to successfully apply for Attendance Allowance at the higher rate of £83.10 per week (£4,321 per year)
- Referred for a check for entitlement for Pension Credit and Council Tax support
- Supported Joan to contact the Council Tax department to request single person discount. Joan's council tax bill was reduced by 25%
- Arranged for Joan to attend a weekly lunch club, and the transport to get there
- Arranged for a trusted handyperson to repair leaking taps
- Referred to the Local Authority for a full assessment of social care and equipment and adaptation needs

What outcomes were achieved?

- Joan is financially better off and confident to manage her income and expenses
- She is attending a regular lunch club and feeling much less isolated due to getting out regularly with the help of Sheffield Community Transport
- Joan attended a Christmas Day lunch at her local church so she didn't spend the day alone
- The handyperson service was able to fix her leaking taps and install a handrail on her stairs whilst she was waiting for a full assessment of her needs by the equipment team, reducing the risk of falls
- The Local Authority Equipment team has installed grab rails by her front door to enable safer exiting and entry, a stair lift to enable her to have access to her bathroom and bedroom and a handrail down the pathway to enable her to exit her home safely
- Joan was now able to manage her own personal care increasing her independence and dignity
- Her rubbish bin is now collected and returned by the council reducing the risk of falls
- Smoke alarms have been installed to reduce risks to her personal safety