

Sliding Doors

Katie is in her early 40's. She lived with her parents in their council house all her life. After her dad died several years ago, she and her mum became very close, providing each other with support on a practical and emotional basis. However, when her mum died recently, Katy found it increasingly difficult to cope. She had always led a very happy but very sheltered life, content with only going out with her parents. They worried a lot about how she would cope and as a result made sure they were always with her. They were a tight little family unit for decades.

Katie has a mild learning disability and epilepsy. She never relied on help from services but soon after her mum's death, she fell and broke her arm. Social services provided a short-term package of 3 care visits a day and meals on wheels. The housing team wrote to Katy offering condolences for the loss of her mum, and explained that whilst she has a secure tenancy with the council for housing, she would need to move to a one person unit as her 2 bedroom home was needed for a larger family.

The housing team became aware of Katy's distress when her cousin angrily phoned them to complain about their letter.

What happens next? Pick a door....

Door 1: They contact the adult social care team to raise their concerns.

Door 2: They phone Sally, the Local Area Coordinator and ask her to help.

Door 1:

The adult social care team explained to housing that Katy was nearing the end of the period of reablement she had been awarded following her fall. She would be assessed for any ongoing social care needs at that point and if eligible, longer term chargeable care and support would be put in place. They also provided comprehensive information and advice about the places Katy could go (such as her local CAB) to get help with her forms.

Housing made a referral to the local social prescribing service who ran sessions at Katy's local surgery. Katy's cousin rang and made the appointment for her at the following week and arranged the morning off work to take her. But when the day of the appointment came, Katy was too upset to go and missed her appointment. Her cousin didn't re-book it as she couldn't afford to take more time off work. Katy told her she didn't like the idea any more.

Katy's cousin complained to the local government ombudsman that Katy was being harassed out of her home and neglected by services. She said Katy was in such distress that she could not stop crying. Katy is unable to get to the local CAB because her parents always went out with her. She has never

been out and about on her own. Katy's cousin accused the council of forcing her into a position to reduce her hours at work just to look after Katy. Katy was now ringing her cousin regularly during the day and night.

The elected member for Katy's ward wrote to the director of housing to ask that the process was slowed in Katy's case until she was 'ready' to move.

Katy began having more regular seizures as her grief along with the emotional distress about her living situation continued over weeks and months.

Housing slowed down their process and gave Katy a grace period to come to terms with things. Katy began refusing to leave the house, even when her cousin arrived to visit. She became more unsteady on her feet and her anxiety increased as her fear of seizures returning got worse. She was allocated a social worker but didn't reach the eligibility criteria. She was signposted to several local bingo sessions and a befriending service.

Following a severe seizure, Katy was hospitalized. Her medication for epilepsy was increased and she returned home with a package of care of three visits a day. Following another complaint from the cousin, social services made a referral to their local befriending service who matched Katy up with a local befriender who also enjoys puzzle books and bingo. She visits Katy three times a week.

12 months on, housing have arranged to visit Katy with her cousin, and put things in motion to move her to a single person unit. Social services have assured Katy and her cousin that the package of care will move with her. Katy is referred by her GP to the local CTPLD to access mental health support for her anxiety.

Door 2:

Housing made a referral to the Local Area Coordination team. Sally (the Local Area Coordinator for Katy's neighbourhood) called to visit Katy at home. Katy's cousin was there and voiced her complaints and concerns at the letters from the Housing team 'trying to evict' Katy. She was mistrustful of Sally and didn't understand what use it was sending someone from the council who couldn't provide any sort of service.

Katy wept for the entire visit. Sally listened carefully and suggested that Katy might like her to come back in a day or two. She made several short visits every few days. Just to sit and to listen and support Katy to be with her grief.

After a while, they started to talk about what Katy wanted. There was no big plan. No big dream. The main thing for Katy was that she was too scared to go anywhere with no-one to take her. Sally listened more.

Sally has a good relationship with the housing team. They called her to see how things were going. Everyone agreed that instead of another letter,

someone from the housing team would accompany Sally on her next visit to see Katy.

It was a tough visit. But Katy felt less overwhelmed and understood the process better. She was reassured that Sally would be with her.

As her housing application was processed, Sally suggested a walk. Just a ten-minute stroll up the road. Katy was unsure but eventually agreed with the help of her walker, they made it to the Church at the top of the road. They dropped into a coffee morning run by people Sally knows – it's one of Sally's regular community haunts. Katy was generously welcomed and started chatting away to her neighbours and new friends.

Very soon Katy began making the 10 minute trip herself. She wasn't worried about losing touch with Sally, partly because she has new friends at the Church, but also because often she would bump into her at the coffee morning.

As Sally watched Katy's confidence grow, she suggested that they go to a monthly cinema club. This time it was a bit further afield and required a trip on the bus. Katy was nervous but keen and they made the trip. Once there, Katy bumped into someone she knew years ago. They reminisced about old times and agreed to come together next time. Katy was delighted to see her old friend again and Sally quickly got the message that she was no longer needed!

The housing application progressed, and Katy moved to a sheltered scheme for younger people very close to where she currently lived. She has no package of care and support and doesn't need community meals. She lives her life with a daily check-in from the sheltered housing officer and occasionally bumping into Sally at the coffee morning. Her cousin is surprised and pleased at how independent Katy has become.

These are the sliding doors of Katy's life. Luckily, Katy's housing team were able to choose door 2. They called Sally. Because their council chose Local Area Coordination.

Choose place based natural support.

Choose the power of listening.

Choose genuine empowerment.

Choose relationship based support.

Choose the simple way of reducing dependence on costly services.

Choose Local Area Coordination.