

Gary's Story

Background

Gary lives in Swansea. The dementia team introduced him to a Local Area Coordinator in May 2018, as there were concerns about his memory, though tests showed he didn't have dementia. Gary is also a wheelchair user following a fall that left him with an injured back. He was feeling socially excluded and wanted to explore opportunities around him.

Dan Garnell, Local Area Coordinator, shares Gary's story:

"I met with Gary and was made to feel very welcome in his home and his life. He is a very proud artist and produces work of an amazing standard, which he showed me.

- *Local Area Coordination focusses on gifts - all that individuals, families and communities bring*

Gary shared that he felt isolated from others and, being a wheelchair user, found it hard to access groups. We discovered that work is needed to make more groups wheelchair accessible because Gary wasn't able to access the buildings where classes were held.

I suggested various options for going out in and around Swansea and after this Gary went to county hall, applied for, and obtained his bus pass, which now gives him and his wife the freedom to get out of the home and explore their surroundings.

- *Starting at the start – a Local Area Coordinator works within a local community and provides information, advice and support to help people solve their own problems*

Gary said he wanted to experiment with acrylic arts and said if it was not for me "kicking him up the bum and encouraging him to do so" he would not have done it.

As we carried on working together, we looked at other options nearby where Gary could continue with his art.

We met with Coastal Housing and Gary brought along a portfolio of his art. Coastal Housing were very taken aback by the quality of his work. They reassured Gary and offered to support him to get some form of art exhibition arranged.

I also asked Gary if he would consider painting a picture for the veterans group in Swansea as it was the centenary of the end of the great war.

Gary decided to donate his artwork to the veterans group in order for them to sell it and keep the majority of the money raised. All he needed back was the costs of the materials, as he wanted to carry on supporting the group in this way.

- *The individual or family leads but the Local Area Coordinator supports people to take practical action for change.*

We met with Sandy from the veterans group and Gary shared his idea, which was well received. As an extra bonus, the veterans group asked Gary if he would be willing to facilitate art therapy sessions for the patrons of the club, pending funding from the NHS.

Gary was also invited to join the group as a supporter and has been encouraged to meet the group members.

- **Reciprocity is an important idea in Local Area Coordination –everyone has something to share and contribute**

Gary has given me a copy of one of his pictures by way of thanking me for what I'm doing for him, I was completely taken aback by this! I have really enjoying working with Gary and his whole family.

Gary and the veterans club have now formed a strong bond and appeared on local television outlining their respective vision working together to help each other get on in life.”

“I would like to add that through your involvement and putting me and the veterans club together I have found a purpose for my art which makes me look forward to the day and has boosted my confidence. It makes me proud to know I will be helping other people through doing something that helps me. My involvement with you and Local Area Coordination has opened up opportunities for me that I would not have had otherwise and working with you literally changed my life in a very positive way.” - Gary