

Maggie's story

in Control is grateful to Maggie for sharing this story

An example of how taking control is so important for older people

This story was told to a member of All of Us, an organisation that develops support plans for older people. At the time of collecting Maggie's story she was in the early stages of taking up her new plan.

The Process towards a better Plan

Before the plan was developed, Maggie had been receiving traditional day support after moving into sheltered accommodation. In her 80's and in need of support because of ill health, she had no idea that there could be different choices in her life.

Maggie was invited to spend a day with 10 other people who were using older peoples' services to learn more about being in control. The experience also enabled her to hear about their experiences. She became very interested in support plans and how they could help someone lead their own life rather than having to fit in with others. Maggie explained that at first, no one had listened to them, particularly about what life had been like in the past and the difference in their lives today.

In the past, Maggie's experiences of Social Service support had been very negative. Being asked questions about her financial circumstances was a particular concern, too. She wondered what they wanted with this information and how it would be used.

For the first couple of meetings Maggie was unsure whether this way of working could make a difference to her life. It was only after the second meeting that Maggie began to have thoughts about what could change for the better,

Before the plan, Maggie was using day support as the only way of having something to do or a way of going out. However, as she began to share things that she missed and that were important to her, she found that she could have a voice too as well as control over a better life.

By making a Support Plan, Maggie developed some ideas about trying some things that she had not done for a long time. This meant joining a new craft club near her own community. She also decided that, if she was ever unwell, she could receive communion from the minister at her local church. She also had some ideas about how to get closer to her own community, develop new relationships as well as have support for the existing ones.

Although Maggie did not want many people involved, she did need help from a planner with whom she had started to feel comfortable. She chose a small group of people who would help her with her plan. It was clear that Maggie did not want close family members to assist her. One reason for this was the emotion she felt about the loss of the active life she had once led. She was frustrated at having to depend on others. Those who did support her found that they could tell just from her eyes how she was feeling.

What else was helpful about the process?

In the past no one had ever told Maggie how much her support was costing, or whether what she was receiving was working or not. No one was prepared to talk about what would happen if her situation became worse.

By developing a support plan, Maggie was able to say how she wished to be supported if she were to fall or become unwell. One of the most powerful supports was a neighbour, named in the plan as her main supporter. If support services needed to know if all was well with Maggie or if she was unable to speak for herself then the neighbour and family were her trusted circle of support. The Individualised Budget enabled Maggie to ask her neighbour to give up her job and become her P.A. She could now receive daily support from a P.A. who was also a good friend.

Maggie was asked what she would tell someone considering the same change in their life:

“Anything will not do! When you are old, people think you don’t matter. Just because you are a certain age doesn’t mean you don’t matter. Old people are ignored and at the bottom of everyone’s list. If you need help, get a plan, have people listen and know who you are and make a plan for how you want your life to be! I wish I had known that the simple things I wanted could have happened. What will happen to those older people who are so unwell and tired, who can’t say what they want you to do? Everyone who needs services needs a plan – and the money and help to make a difference.”