

CASE STUDY

VILLAGE AGENTS – PREVENTION IN PRACTICE

Janet and Graham, joint Overton Village Agents

Janet has been a Village Agent since 2012, and Graham since 2015. Both are retired from full time employment. For them, in their own words, *“the VA service offers a uniquely holistic view of a client's situation, through which VAs work with clients on multiple facets of their lives, often over months and years”*.

“Signposting is not what people want. Yes, they may call us for information or visit our weekly surgeries at the library, as a starting point – but when people contact us they're often desperate and at breaking point - they can't cope any more. They start talking about one thing, then half a dozen more things emerge – what they've called about is the tip of an iceberg. And their families - if they have any - might not want, or be able to support them – or even know about the situation they're in. ”

The story of Richard and Gaynor, narrated by Graham: (the clients have agreed to share their story)

Richard and Gaynor live in their own home with two dogs. Richard has had several falls, which took him to hospital. Sent home without sufficient care, he then had a stroke and went back in hospital, and was now home but doubly incontinent, with a sore that wasn't healing, and feeling nervous moving around his home. Gaynor had given up work to care for him and was struggling, both financially and mentally, and neither had any social contact with others. Graham had a phone call from Gaynor who was having problems caring for her husband and didn't know what to do.

- Graham (G) visited – talked about their issues – encouraged them to make an appointment for Richard with the doctor and G spoke to the surgery on their behalf (resulting in leg dressings changed regularly). G committed to weekly phone calls and a monthly visit.
- G visited again - incontinence issues – persuaded them to buy some pads, and Richard to use them (resulting in improvements to quality of life).
- G suggested that Richard might benefit from seeing a physio and using a walker – contacted a mobility company (resulting in improved mobility).



- £££s still a problem – G suggested that Richard could apply for AA and / or a Carers' allowance for Gaynor. The form was filled by ACH and the application was granted at £62 per week.
- Garden becoming overgrown – G put them in touch with a local gardening business, now that they could afford to pay for some help.
- G encouraged the couple to ask for a financial assessment to seek help with personal care which was becoming challenging. This took place, and some help with personal care was made available, to which Richard and Gaynor contributed a small amount. Handrails, rising toilet seats and other improvements were installed.
- Now that mobility was improving and spirits lifting, things were more under control. G suggested the local Steady and Strong class in Whitchurch and helped Richard apply for a Blue Badge, so that Gaynor could drive him there.
- G then put both in touch with the mobility scheme in Basingstoke so that they could go into town if they wanted to.
- AT G's suggestion, Richard could now re-join the choir of which he used to be a member, and G told them how they could take advantage of the Cinema Concessions scheme.

This all took place over a period of six months. Now Graham doesn't visit regularly but rings every couple of months to check how things are going, and is currently helping Gaynor look into respite care. Life is considerably better than it was for Richard and Gaynor, and they've still got their independence, the chance to enjoy small pleasures, and each other.

If not the Village Agent, who would have done all of that? Who would have had the holistic, local oversight of this couple's situation? Without the VA intervention, what would the cost and end result have been for them, and for the state?

