

## Supporting Carers

### The Social Worker

Narrator: Nicola James is a social worker with Surrey County Council. For the past five years she's worked with disabled young adults and their carers.

### Telephone Call

Nicola James: *Hi is that Sarah? It's Nicola from the Transition Team, I just want to speak to somebody about arranging a third party Direct Payment maybe a kind of visit to the family.*

Nicola James: I think the big thing is that we're working with people with learning disabilities, with severe learning disabilities and it is a big, big job for any carer. So, we're looking at the difficulties that the carer is having and trying to support them to continue with their caring role.

Narrator: Putting together a care package for both the service user and the carer, is a big part of Nicola's job.

Nicola James: Okay so today we're going to visit Caroline, she's Kevin's mum. Kevin's a young autistic gentleman who also has severe learning disabilities. We just started a new support plan for him, which is part of the new Self Directed Support and we're just really going to discuss where we are with that and how things are going with regard to his new personal assistant and other things that we're putting in place.

### Caroline Hunter - Carer

Caroline Hunter: It's vital for us, as a family, to have the right package in place for Kev because if he's not happy when he is out having some, a short break or having a rest then we just wouldn't enjoy it either and you know like anyone you want your children to be happy and to be safe and secure. So, if it's not the right set up then it's no use at all.

Narrator: Kevin's new personal assistant, Devon, is shortly due to make his first visit so Nicola is dropping by to have a chat with Caroline.

### Discussion:

Nicola James: How you doing?

Caroline Hunter: Okay thank you. Did you have a good drive?

Nicola James: Oh yes.  
So how are you getting on?

Caroline Hunter: Oh Kevin's delighted.

Nicola James: And Devon's starting.

Caroline Hunter: He's starting, yes tomorrow he's coming at 11:00 for four hours for the first visit so they're going to go to the cinema, have some lunch and then come back here and probably play the Play Station or the X-box or whatever. So, yeah Kev's really excited about the ...

Nicola James: Part of what we can do and a lot of the time is about respite, I think that's the big thing but I think if you can just have a break or know that you're going to have a break even if it's once a month, over night it allows you to carry on through some of the difficult times.  
  
And how's the respite going, have you been to visit?

Caroline Hunter: We went to visit The Hedges at Badger's Wood on Wednesday at tea time and he seemed to like it. He liked the lady who will be there the next time he goes, which is important for his routine. So, we had a tour round and we've organised a lunchtime visit in half term so we don't have to take him out of college and change his routine because he doesn't like that as you know and if that goes well they are going to book a night in. So, that will be the first night there.

Nicola James: Wow his first night away.

Caroline Hunter: Yeah, fingers crossed.

Narrator: With so many new commitments, Kevin was unable to take part in this film. Ensuring he's paired with a young personal assistant who shares similar interests, has been a high priority for Nicola.

Nicola James: His mum was taking him to training and to matches and I'm sure a lot of young people, although they like them supporting them, they don't really want their mum, turning up with their mum and that was one of the big things but also helping him with his independent living skills, so that he can move on and can be more independent hopefully in a few years and move on to supported living and away from the family home. That gives mum that time to get used to him leaving, that slow process because obviously you know it's difficult isn't it for any mum that somebody who is disabled as well even more difficult.

Caroline Hunter: It is very hard letting go, having a young person with disabilities because they are so vulnerable and things will happen, not on a daily basis, thank goodness, but

quite regularly, which really show that vulnerability but I think for Kevin's sake and for ours we have to let him, we have to let go and we have to let him take calculated risks in the same way as we do let Kerry, who's 16, take calculated risks and try and not treat him too differently from how we treat her.

Narrator: Kevin's care plan gives him a buddy to spend time with and it allows Caroline to spend some quality time with her daughter Kerry.

Caroline Hunter: Having the package in place for Kev allows us to do things that really would be very difficult if we didn't because there are things that I would love to do with Kerry and have wanted to do with her and haven't had the time. So, we go shopping or we go for coffee and cake and we can sit longer than 10 minutes. Whereas if Kev was with us, once he'd had something to eat and something to drink we'd be off and for my husband and myself, if we've had support in the evenings then we can go and see a show, or he's very keen on music so we can go to a concert or something like that.

Nicola James: My biggest challenge and what I see as the biggest challenge in social work really is managing your case load so that everybody gets the time that they deserve really.

Caroline Hunter: Nicola's involvement with Kevin has been great from many different angles in that she knew Kev from when he was 16 and kept in contact with the family and so therefore I built up, I feel we built up a good relationship and I definitely trusted her and felt that she knew what his needs were and I think just knowing that someone is there at the end of the phone or at the end of an email just to answer any, what is probably quite often, silly little questions, which was great.

End of Recording]