



Transcript:

Prevention: Promoting Wellbeing

[Music playing]

Brian: We had sixty-five years of my life, I felt absolutely devastated, and I got so as I didn't much care if I was crossing the busy main road whether I got to the other side or not.

Gwen: My life changed very suddenly when I lost my husband, and I thought that's it. You lead a totally different life, you have to change completely.

Narrator: There is nothing extraordinary about these stories. Brian and Gwen are among thousands of older people who find themselves alone in their latter years. Social care professionals are now being encouraged to turn their attention towards the wellbeing and happiness of older people. Leading the way is the personal social services research unit.

Prof. Julien Forder: Wellbeing is an important concept in social care, because it gives us a way of understanding what the impact of services are. The challenge, I would say, is in terms of how we actually measure what wellbeing is. It is one of those concepts, like quality of life, that is pretty easy to say, and trips off the tongue, but understanding what it really means is the challenge. And so there has been, I think, a fair amount of work now about how we could go about measuring those things in a systematic way, in a way that means that we could actually make comparisons.

Narrator: The need to promote wellbeing is something that is being recognised in Dorset, a county where almost a third of the population is over the age of retirement.

Cllr. Andrew Cattaway: Projections say that by the year 2020, I think it is, our number of a hundred and thirty thousand of retired age will be up to a hundred and sixty thousand.

Narrator: As a result Dorset County Council set up its partnership for older people project, known as POP with NHS Dorset. It has a budget of £800,000 a year until 2013.

Cllr. Andrew Cattaway: The whole emphasis is preemptive, it is trying to enable people to live longer in their own homes, to live securely and confidently in their own communities, in order that they have a fuller life and, to be blunt about it, in order that they cost us

less than people who go into nursing homes, or indeed into acute hospitals.

Sue Warr: Everything that we do throughout the programme, top to bottom, side to side, is led by older people, so therefore a majority on our strategic board for older people out of seven voting members.

Narrator: The majority of the budget goes on the Wayfinder programme, where older people are paid to get help others get advice and support.

Male Speaker: *I am quite happy for the Wayfinders to promote what they are doing and actually just signpost people to the service.*

Narrator: Here they are meeting to discuss issues that have come up in their own communities.

Female Speaker: *It would be a way of keeping us up to date of what is going on.*

Sue Warr: *And, as I said to the meeting yesterday, the whole of the WRVS ...*

Narrator: A smaller element with a budget of £35,000 a year is the community commissioning fund. It is this pot of money which generates social projects to promote wellbeing. Each scheme receives seed funding, and must then pay for itself.

Cllr. Andrew Cattaway: There are lunch clubs, there are friendship groups, I am aware of table tennis clubs, dance clubs, singing groups. The general scheme of small groups that POP promotes tend to be lunch clubs in village halls. So for our initial up-front investment of approximately £2,000 – it varies in every case – we have a group that is self-sustaining and is looking after thirty, and in some cases forty, people and making sure that they have both a social time and a really high quality meal.

Narrator: Pilgrim House in Weymouth is home to one of those clubs. It has become a social hub for older people from the local community.

Gwen: Somebody just said to me all of a sudden, why don't you come to the club? And I said, what club? And from then on I never asked any more, I entered this place and I have never regretted it.

Narrator: Age Concern, Weymouth runs several groups here, including three lunch clubs, a cinema group and IT training, all started with POP funding.

Nigel Coles: Older people are no different from anybody else in the community, so they all have their own reasons for wanting to come to a lunch club. If I was to generalise, I suppose in the main it is people on their own who have lost their partner and are lonely, and need to re-engage in that social communication which they have lost really when their partner has died.

Female Speaker: *All the fives, fifty-five. Okay over there, are you ready?*

Gwen: We come in, in the mornings, and there is already coffee, tea, biscuits or whatever. We all have a sort of general chat with each other, and if someone is a bit down you try and put a smile on a face that looked a bit not happy. And we are there for each other, that is the main reason why nearly all of us in this club come, for each other. Because we are all in the same boat, and loneliness is something we don't want to get hold of us again.

Nigel Coles: What we see ourselves as doing is promoting people's independence for a lot longer than they would if they just stayed on in their own homes. We see ourselves very much in terms of a preventative service, where some of the people that come to us won't have to go to the statutory agencies quite so early on in their life.

Gwen: We are a very happy band of people, and you get what you don't get very often when you are alone, a lovely hug. And it does mean a lot believe you me.

[Music playing]

Narrator: Another POP funded project has changed the life of eighty-eight year old Brian who became depressed and isolated after losing his wife.

Brian: I decided that I needed to do something, so I started coming here to the dances, and of course I wasn't very good then because if I did one quick-step I was glad to sit it out for the next few dances to get my breath back; now I could do every one.

Narrator: The dances were just once a month, with dancers paying £5 for each session.

Brian: And a lot of people who came here said could we have them more often. So we got a grant from POP which made it possible to have them fortnightly rather than monthly. I felt so down, and now I feel really fitter, healthier and absolutely on top of the world. Yeah, it has made the world of difference to me.

Sue Warr: The outcome stories, and the outcomes for people are the most important thing to us.

Narrator: A study is currently taking place to see where savings have been made in Dorset. The results will be published in the spring of 2011.

Sue Warr: The cost benefit analysis we are doing so that we can demonstrate that actually these benefits also equate to cash savings at the end of the day.

Prof. Julien Forder: It is early days, and there is more work that needs to be done, but we are beginning to get some indication of what the cost

effectiveness of different types of services are. And it is certainly the case that some of the low level kinds of services that social care is providing do indeed improve people's wellbeing, and are generally relatively low cost. So there is some indication that they can be cost effective.

Narrator: The outcome for Brian has been astonishing, his life has changed beyond recognition.

Female Speaker: We just danced once a month and it sort of snowballed from there.

Brian: We have so much in common, and I think we find strengths in each other.

Female Speaker: We spend so much time together, and our interests are the same; jazz and dancing, and music generally.

Brian: We have now decided to become permanent partners and I have got my bungalow up for sale at the moment. I think it has transformed both our lives really, and I hope it does so for a long time to come.

[End of Recording]