



## Social Care TV

### TRANSCRIPT

#### Living in a care home: a positive experience for a person with dementia

##### [Background conversation]

**Narrator:**

00:00:26 For Sandra Barrack, weekly trips to see her mother are a source of both joy and comfort.

**Sandra:** Mum, you're all dressed up.

**Mary:** Ah, all dressed up and nowhere to go.

**Narrator:**

00:00:37 Her mother Mary lives in a Residential Care Home but mother and daughter are able to share outings and conversations which help to remind Sandra of the woman her mother used to be.

**Sandra:**

00:00:48 She was a happy cheerful Geordie lassie and liked dancing and she was full of fun. She was a very caring mother and somebody who was quite social and loved talking to people.

**Mary:** Look at this.

**Sandra:** Look at that looker, thirty four ninety nine.

**Mary:** Is that all? [laughs]

**Sandra:**

00:01:08 She started off as a tailor working in Fenwick's in Newcastle for...and she was very proud of the fact that she had made suits for the Duchess of Northumberland, erm but once she married she stayed home and looked after us.

**Narrator:**

00:01:24

In 1994, Mary suddenly alerted Sandra to her memory problems.

**Sandra:**

00:01:30

When I was pregnant with my first child, I wen....I remember going up home and my mother saying, Sandra I'm losing my words. And then over the immediate years that followed it began to intensify. She was waking up in the night and she was convinced that there was a man trying to get into her bedroom climbing a ladder and we would all say to her, oh no pet, there's no one on a ladder and she would say, but Sandra I can see him.

**Narrator:**

00:02:02

Dementia was quickly diagnosed and while Sandra's father was alive to look after her, Mary was able to stay at home in Cumbria, but when he died in 2001, Sandra was faced with the dilemma which affects thousands of families.

**Sandra:**

00:02:17

Clearly she couldn't stay in her own house, I mean she couldn't look after herself, she was trying to defrost fish fingers in front of the gas fire and she was a danger to herself. The only option, it was clear was for her to go into a home because I worked full time and had two small children. There wasn't ever a choice about having her to come to live with us because she needed somebody with her twenty four hours a day.

[Singing]

**Sandra:**

00:02:54

She wanted to be in Christian Home because she was...a very...has a very strong faith, she got very upset when she was briefly in another home when other people were saying 'oh my god' and she would remonstrate with them and say 'Don't take the name of the lord in vain'.

**Narrator:**

00:03:13

Sandra chose a Methodist Care Home in Hertfordshire.

**Man:** Well we got that one right didn't we?

**Mary:** We did.

**Man:** We did.

**Sandra:**

00:03:20

Her main feeling is that she's on holiday at a Christian Guest House and sometimes, especially in the early years she would talk with Beryl or Doris or whoever it was, about we've been in here a while, should be getting packed now for going home.

**Andrea:**

00:03:36

The fact that she's been living here for seven years next month, doesn't faze her at all. She still thinks she's on holiday, she thinks her family will come and take her home most weekends.

[Singing]

**Narrator:**

00:03:54

Sandra feels happy that her mother is well cared for. The home has over forty residents, fifteen in the special dementia wing. Mary has flourished in this environment.

**Sandra:**

00:04:05

The improvement has been astonishing. Er first of all she is no longer isolated as she was with my father. She's surrounded by female friends. She doesn't know their names but she knows their faces. The nurses are very chatty and also she was put on anti-depressants soon after going there and her paranoia and her anxiety and her fear all dropped away, and the happy girl, the happy Geordie girl came back.

[Singing]

**Narrator:**

00:04:41

Sandra took time to search for the right home.

**Mary:** What's your name?

**Nicky:** My names Nicky.

**Mary:** Mickey?

**Nicky:** Nicky.

**Sandra:**

00:04:53

I think that the most important thing if you're looking for a home for one of your parents is to observe very carefully how the staff interact with the people who are there. Are the staff kind and is there going to be continuative care, to the... how do the staff stay in this home. If there's a very low turnover then it's a happy home and the residents are likely to be happy.

**Andrea:**

00:05:21

Many families, daughters, sons and spouses find it very difficult letting go of their relative into a care home. They feel that they are giving up, they're failing that person by allowing them to come into a home.

**Sandra:**

00:05:35

I wouldn't say I ever felt any guilt about my mother having to go into a home because the situation was one that I couldn't change. It was very difficult to explain to her, and I remember I had, I, I, I took her down by car from Cumber...Cumbria to the home in Hertfordshire and she kept saying 'but Sandra can't I live with you, but Sandra I could help to look after the children' and it was impossible to explain to her that she couldn't even look after herself and her feeling of rejection was very painful.

**Andrea:**

00:06:12

The way that we help them cope with that is to allow them to be as much use to that person while they're in the home. So they may come in everyday, they may tuck them into bed, so they feel they're still able to look after that person.

**Narrator:**

00:06:25 It's important that people with dementia don't withdraw into themselves. Both Sandra and the care home encourage activities which engage Mary's mind.

**Sandra:**

00:06:35 She likes going out into the garden, helping gardening and erm flirting with any passing gardeners or staff, male staff particularly, she meets...

**Andrea:**

00:06:46 She will actively dig in the garden, pull up weeds, pull up the vegetables that we've planted and helps sow the seeds and things. We think it's important that if a resident has enjoyed a hobby whether its gardening or whatever that they are still allowed to do that in whatever way they're able to do it. It's a good therapy.

**Sandra:**

00:07:03 This is really cheerful isn't it? So that's the prettiest one, do you think we should take that one?

**Mary:** That's a lovely one.

**Narrator:**

00:07:09 Sandra regularly takes her mother out to do some of the things she liked before she developed dementia.

**Sandra:** That might dr... that's a brighter colour isn't it?

**Mary:** And it's a... that difference.

**Sandra:**

00:07:20 Yes its more striking your quite right... it's good to get out of this, really it is quite a small wing and they have to lock it because obviously some of the patients wonder but I think it's very important for her to get some exercise but also she needs the stimulation of ordinary life.

**Andrea:**

00:07:38

It's important that Mary is still able to go out into the community and she likes being around people, talking to people. She thinks that everybody she meets is someone she should know and she will say oh hello how are you today? Shake their hand, she might say it again five minutes later because she feels she's meeting the person again but she enjoys that.

**Sandra:**

00:08:01

My mother now lives in a very small hole in the present and when you're with her, you have to enter that present moment with her...are you red riding hood then?

**Mary:**

Ooo [laughs]

**Sandra:**

[Laughs] Green riding hood in your case.

**Mary:**

I haven't got me red coat on.

**Sandra:**

No, we forgot to bring it this time.

**Narrator:**

00:08:20

People with dementia often lose their short term memory and their long term memory may give them a different sense of the present.

**Andrea:**

00:08:28

Reality for the resident is wherever they're living at the time with the dementia, and they can be living quite often in their childhood, in their own children's childhood or at some past point in their life. And what we try and do is to go into the past with them so wherever they are we go with them rather than try and bring them back to reality, they don't understand reality as we do.

**Sandra:**

Chocolate Bunnies

**Mary:**

Oh lovely, oh what a lovely face.

**Sandra:**

00:08:56

It's good isn't it?... Sometimes I ask her what year it is and she says I think its 1960 isn't it Sandra and so she's always very surprised when I take her to supermarket and there's so many goods on display.

**Man:**

And you've got a son haven't you?

**Mary:**

I've got a son.

**Man:**

But he's abroad somewhere isn't he?

**Mary:**

He's a rascal.

**Man:**

He's a rascal?

**Narrator:**

00:09:15

Mary likes talking about her son who lives in America but some residents talk about family members who've died and they think are still alive. Those who look after them take care not to make them confront reality.

**Andrea:**

00:09:30

If a resident has lost someone, either their partner, their husband, wife, daughter, son whatever, we don't bring them back to reality. We don't tell them that person has died or they're no longer in their lives. They quite often imagine their coming home for their tea, that they're maybe in the other room or they're upstairs in bed and we go along with that because if you bring them back to reality, and tell them someone has died they actually go through the mourning process again and you can do that each time, you could be doing that several times a day which is unfair to that person.

**Andrea:**

00:10:02

The residents with dementia are living in the past in the main. They're not able to, to realise what day it is, what time of year it is, so reminiscence is very important because they're able to talk about that as if it was yesterday. They can remember their childhood, they can remember what they did at work, and it encourages conversation.

**Man:** Well what about you start it with your favourite hymn?

[Singing]

**Sandra:**

00:10:26 So, I'll see you in a few days time.

**Mary:** Good.

**Sandra:** Mm hum. You behave yourself.

**Mary:** What's that mean?

**Sandra:** [Laughs]

**Narrator:**

00:10:33 For people with dementia the choice of care home is crucial. Does it meet their needs as individual human beings rather than just as patients with dementia? And does it encourage its residents to exercise their minds and maintain as much contact as possible with the world outside.

**Sandra:**

00:10:51 She's very talkative, she's very happy, she likes the hymns, she likes the gardening and she enjoys the company and I think they couldn't really have been er a much better outcome for her.

### **Title: Key learning points**

Finding the right care home for someone is very important; it must meet their individual needs

Observing care workers interact with people in a care home will provide an insight into how the care home meets individual needs

We all need to acknowledge the reality of the person with dementia and not force them to join our reality

Care homes should work in partnership with family members, allowing them to provide the support they wish to give their loved ones

**END**