



Shared Lives Better Lives

Bill's story

Bill is in his 80s, and lives with his Shared Lives carers Bernie and Chris in their home in Leicester.

How Bill came to live with Bernie and Chris

Bill rented a room from a landlady for nearly forty years, during which time they became good friends. Following Bill's dementia diagnosis his friend was providing him with informal care and friendship as well as a place to live. Sadly she was diagnosed with a terminal illness and Bill moved into one of Leicester's elderly people's homes on a temporary basis while a long term plan was made.

Bill met Bernie and her husband Chris through the Shared Lives matching process. Bernie says 'We had cared for people with

learning disabilities before but not with dementia, so we were quite anxious about how this would work.' They took it slowly - Bernie and Chris began regularly visiting Bill at the care home and Bill tried an overnight stay. Bernie and Chris came to feel Bill was the right person for them but it was down to Bill to decide if he wanted to be placed with them. He's lived with them since October 2014.

Support from the Shared Lives team

At the beginning the support worker visited every week. Now Bill's settled she only needs to visit every couple of months to

monitor his general health and wellbeing and to give advice. Bernie takes Bill along to Shared Lives get-togethers where they can meet others in the scheme.

How Shared Lives has improved Bill's life

The change in Bill is remarkable. Bill remains physically active, and his confidence has improved, especially now that Bernie has helped him get new glasses, better fitting shoes and slippers, and a new hearing aid. He's regained his independence and dignity. Bernie says 'Bill's got much more mobility now, it's good that he's able to shave himself and take his

plate to the kitchen.' Bernie has taken Bill to church and to a memory café at a community centre. The support of a Shared Lives carer can help someone stay engaged with life.

Caring for a person with dementia in your home

Living with a person with dementia requires special skills and understanding. Bernie and Chris provide the physical help, friendship and safe home that Bill needs. They manage trips out carefully, as these can potentially be stressful for Bill. 'Bill has increased his confidence in going out' explains Chris. 'He enjoyed going to the seaside with us and having fish and chips.' Bernie adds 'We have quite a steady routine. Bill would not cope out of the house on his own. He is content with simple pleasures such as the TV, and likes it when our grandchildren come to visit.' 'It's a busy house', Bill laughs.

Sadly Bill's former landlady and lifelong friend died a few months ago. Bernie and Chris took him to visit daily during her last week. He still has her photo in his room and wears a ring



she gave him, and is able to talk about her with deep fondness. Emotional support is very important. Bernie adds 'Sometimes as people go on with dementia their previous friendships



and family connections drop away. So the family unit they live with becomes more important.'

Why Shared Lives works for them

Bernie and Chris have made caring their career and Bill is now part of their family set-up. They receive an allowance for caring for him, and are able to combine that with their other jobs. Bill feels very settled. 'I've got used to being here. Bernie's a good person and her husband's a good man. I always want to stay with this lady and her husband - I'd be lost without them.'



Find out more about becoming a Shared Lives carer:

- call the Shared Lives team on 0116 454 3740
- email sharedlives@leicester.gov.uk
- search Shared Lives on leicester.gov.uk

