

Case study one: Sally Smith

Sally Smith is a lady in her early 50's who has Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She is now unable to mobilise or transfer independently and uses a wheelchair. She has limited use of her upper body but can still use her arms and hands to an extent and for short periods. She has a large package of care which includes carrying out personal care tasks and support with meals. She uses a direct payment for this. Her husband supports her with getting up in the morning and her evening personal care four days per week but working shifts prevent him from doing this every day.

Jo is a social worker and she arranges to see Sally at home to review her support package. During the conversation Sally tells Jo that she is feeling depressed as she is isolated and bored throughout the day. She feels she is 'unable to use her brain' and is 'just sitting waiting for the next carer visit'. She had considered attending a day centre but felt there would not be people with similar interests and that it would remind her of her disability.

Jo asks Sally about her past hobbies and interests. Sally tells Jo she loves music, she played the violin for over 20 years and used to be in an orchestra where she used to live. She also used to sing sometimes. As her MS has progressed Sally is no longer able to play the violin and really misses being involved in music. Jo asks Sally about her singing, this is something Sally can still do so she does some research on musical societies and groups in the area and locates a choir near to Sally. She explains that Sally could use some of her direct payment to pay for support to get to and from the choir practices. Sally and Jo review the care package and after speaking with the care agency it is agreed that this can be reconfigured so that Sally's carers do an evening visit to coincide with choir practice and that they will accompany her to this instead. Sally contacts the choir and after speaking to the choir leader she feels she would like to go along.

Sally's husband takes her to the first practice to see if she likes it. After this she uses her direct payment to get one of her usual carers to accompany her to practice. Sally was conscious of being in her wheelchair on her visit to the choir but now says she feels so much about herself 'people there see me as a singer and musician rather than as a disabled person needing help'. She says 'I feel like a person again, people talk to me directly and ask for my opinion about the music. Before I felt like people were just seeing the wheelchair and often they talked to my husband as if being in a wheelchair affects your mind as well!'.