

We are pleased to have permission to share this story of one of the amazing clients from Seniors Helping Seniors. Please read this great article written by Sally Wilse - Owner Manager at Seniors Helping Seniors UK.

We want to celebrate the Exercise Referral Scheme and team at The King's School Recreation Centre in Canterbury, Kent. Our client lives alone and she has a dementia diagnosis. At 92 years of age with no family nearby and all friends passed away, Seniors Helping Seniors has been supporting with daily visits since 2016. Two carers were carefully selected for her and they visit to prompt medication from her dosette box, support daily housekeeping tasks and help keep her upbeat.

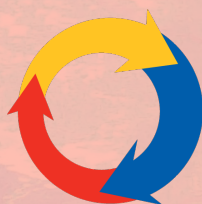
As a former rambler, walks in the woods with our carer Colin is a daily highlight. We have noticed that without daily exercise, dementia symptoms become worse. As an action on National Fitness Day last autumn, we talked to all our clients to find out what physical exercise may appeal.

Whilst this client loves her walking and needs no encouragement to get out and about, we were worried her daily walks in the woods may be threatened during the winter months. We found out she used to enjoy swimming so we embarked on a mission to organise the right place and the right sessions for her. Three months later, we are thrilled we stuck at it. Her family confirms the swimming is a "resounding success" for their mum.

Even though it's been well over 20 years since she had been in the water and she'd "never have thought about swimming ever again" she immediately swam 25m, front crawl, under the watchful eye of Steve Castle, The Exercise Referral Manager. Apparently he had to keep the "reigns on" and what style she had!

She said the first swim was "Freedom itself" "Best day of her life" like "Being in heaven". She remained noticeably upbeat for days, and she was even more incredibly positive than usual. As a positive person her memory lapses worry her, she loves to have it confirmed that she is doing well. Her family has given permission to share this story so she may inspire others.

The Exercise referral scheme has been offered at The King's School Recreation Centre since 2012 and over 600 people have engaged in exercise and they have eight qualified team members. What makes this team so special is their patience. They would love to see more people take up the scheme that discounts sessions and recommends suitable exercise for people with diagnoses. Referrals can be issued by any registered health professional such as a GP, consultant, physiotherapist, dietician, nurse specialist or OneYou health advisor.



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Seniors Helping Seniors believe the key to any activity is company - “it’s tough to do something new, especially when you’re confronted with a new diagnosis or you just can’t get yourself motivated like you used to”.

Trust is an important differentiator in Care. And especially in the case of Dementia, trust is everything. Experienced and mature Carers build trust with clients. The same carer visits, so trust can build more quickly and flexibility is built at an organisational level. Reacting to changing needs keeps clients in control and people can remain on track.

Seniors Helping Seniors initiated the exercise referral for this client. Calling the surgery’s reception team to research options, organising a more appropriate phone appointment while the carer was present, hand delivering the right forms to the right place at the right time.

The client’s GP knows this patient well and he also knows the Carer from past appointments. GP visits are a precious resource and the time it takes to refer someone to the exercise scheme has huge rewards in terms of preventative care and wellbeing. As with all things, the devil is in the detail. As a social enterprise, Seniors Helping Seniors allocates huge resources on the details. The focus is helping clients engage, and staying healthy. The service is over 20 years old.

It launched in the UK in Canterbury and has provided care to the elderly across Thanet since 2013. Employing active older people for their relevant care experience, many carers are retired professionals but most is expertise from the personal experiences of looking after loved ones.

The big difference, and the reason for great successes like the story of this client, is matching carers to clients carefully. The same person visits to ‘do with’ as opposed to telling people what they ‘could’ or ‘should’ be doing! Talking about mealtimes, shopping & cooking a meal with someone and sitting down to eat with them, is the best way to ensure people eat well.

Taking the client to the swimming pool, bringing her home again and making sure she has a good warm meal after her swim, is the reason her family agreed to this new activity for their mum. Being with her throughout, is the reason the recreation centre accepted her complex case onto the scheme. Being with her for the GP visit, safeguarded the all important referral appointment.

The King’s School
Recreation Centre

