

Caring for my husband

My life as a carer for my husband began in 2005, a year after we were married.

My husband has had multiple cancers, including tongue cancer, but he'd been in remission for three years. Then he had to have some of his teeth extracted as the initial chemo and radiotherapy had ossified his jaw bones.

So began a steep learning curve of adapting recipes to suit his diminished capabilities and acting as an 'interpreter' when people couldn't understand him.

I'd seen the Carers Outreach Service posters at my GP surgery, but hadn't considered myself to be a carer. After all I was only doing what was natural. But I was finding it difficult, not physically as my husband was still completely self sufficient. The hard part for me as his sole carer was having to mirror his life so to speak, as I was acting as his interpreter everywhere we went:- at hospital and GP appointments, bank and shops, with friends etc. So I realised I needed to find some support from other carers and from Carers Outreach.

I contacted Carers Outreach in 2007 and found amongst the other carers many kind and wise men and women, many of whom have become my friends. The staff have been a huge help whenever I've needed some information or pointing in the right direction. For example, they arranged for me to have a Carers Assessment from Social Services, which has made both our lives easier.

We now have a carer coming in every day to help my husband with his meals, and every fortnight a carer comes to sit with him for three precious hours so I can go out.

The benefit to us both is that we aren't locked into being together 24/7 which can be so damaging to a relationship.

Carers Outreach has arranged many useful workshops where we can learn anything from the importance of arranging Power of Attorney to First Aid. These are often combined with coffee and lunch which I always enjoy along with the company of other carers.

It isn't all workshops and First Aid courses. I've been on some very enjoyable days out too.

We all know that as a direct result of their caring duties, carers often have little free time and can become isolated. With Carers Outreach there are always people to share a problem and lighten the load.

~ a Conwy carer