I've now got a job in a dementia ward. I'm really looking forward to it. I've been doing some research on dementia and I think it's an important area of work. I've got a lot of experience working with older adults and I'm really interested in the way that they age. I've heard a lot of stories from people with dementia and I think it's really important to listen to them.

Aims and Objectives of the St Joseph's Newham Namaste Care Service

1. To offer practical, social and emotional support to people with advanced dementia and their carers/families.
2. To offer support specifically for people with advanced dementia who have families and/or carers who wish to look after them at home.
3. To deliver Namaste Care to people with advanced dementia who have been assessed as suitable for this support.
4. To create a team of skilled volunteers from the local community who provide practical, emotional and social support to people with advanced dementia and their carers through appropriate meaningful activities.
5. To widen access to community support for people living with advanced dementia in Newham through Namaste Care sessions at the service users or carers own home.
6. To support people living with advanced dementia to remain at home in their preferred place of care and to reduce unnecessary hospital or hospice admissions.
7. To provide Namaste Care support that is sensitive to the specific cultural, religious and language needs of the population of Newham.
8. To deliver Namaste Care in a manner that is sensitive to disabled, lesbian, gay and transgender service users.

9. Raise the profile of the desirability of supporting people with advanced dementia in their own home.
10. Provide support to the families and carers of people with advanced dementia.
11. Increase the availability of information regarding advanced dementia care and support through knowledge of the local area.
12. Provide Namaste Care in a variety of forms to meet the diverse cultural and social needs of the local population.
13. Work collaboratively and in partnership with other professional groups and organisations to deliver high level outcomes to support people with advanced dementia.

The Namaste Care Service at St Joseph's Hospice was set up in July 2014 to offer practical, social and emotional support to people at home affected by advanced dementia in Newham which is one of the most deprived boroughs in the UK. Volunteers are trained and work with family members to carry out a variety of activities including:

- making a memory box
- playing favourite music
- reading favourite books/poems
- encouraging gentle movement
- giving a hand massage
- combing or brushing hair

This service is provided in the community, in people's own homes. The Service provides individualised volunteer help and support to people with advanced dementia, and their families.

Namaste Care is not a medical treatment; the word 'Namaste' means 'to honour the spirit within' and was selected to describe this special way of providing comfort, connectedness and wellbeing as the person with dementia approaches the end of their life. Volunteers are trained to provide Namaste Care in the person's own home and to teach families, carers and friends how to incorporate the Namaste Care philosophy and principles into everyday life.

CASE STUDY

PP is an 82 year old woman living on her own with carers coming in four times per day. Her main carer is her son (RP) who can only visit in the evening after he has closed his shop. PP is from India and speaks Gujarati. She is matched through the Namaste Care Service to a volunteer, Amina. PP has had a diagnosis of dementia for 7 years. PP and Amina have had 11 Namaste sessions and made a lot of progress together. PP was very depressed and wasn't eating very well when they first met. Since spending time with Amina, PP has shown more interest in the two discuss and exchange recipes; PP used to be a very good cook. Amina often reads to PP in Gujarati, and they chat and laugh a lot too.

Q. How are you finding the sessions, Amina?

Amina: ‘Yes, a lot. We talk and we remember a lot. I read to her as well, we spend the whole two hours together. We look at old photos as well, and we laugh. We read the newspaper and magazines. PP really engages and asks questions, she wants to know more. We eat and chat.’

RP: ‘We have had other carers come before but they did not engage with her. When Amina is here, even I feel more relaxed. I know she's doing the right thing. She has changed the way we interact with PP. She really enjoys it when Amina is here, and her mood is better. I can see a difference in her attitude.’

Q. How have the Namaste Care sessions been?

RP: ‘She has changed for the better, the GP said she was very depressed. She has changed her attitude and is more relaxed.’

Q. What more activities would you like to do?

Amina: ‘PP used to make great food, so I often give her recipes to try. We have made onion bhajis and chicken curry. She still doesn’t eat as much as before, but she is more interested in the food now. I can see a difference in her mood and attitude.’

Q. How are you finding the sessions, PP?

PP: ‘I like Amina. She is very kind and caring. I feel better when she comes.’

Q. How is that going now?

Amina: ‘Yes, a lot. We talk and we remember a lot. I read to her as well, we spend the whole two hours together. We look at old photos as well, and we laugh. We read the newspaper and magazines. PP really engages and asks questions, she wants to know more. We eat and chat.’

RP: ‘We have had other carers come before but they did not engage with her. When Amina is here, even I feel more relaxed. I know she’s doing the right thing. She has changed the way we interact with PP. She really enjoys it when Amina is here, and her mood is better. I can see a difference in her attitude.’

Q. How did you learn about Namaste?

Amina: ‘I was asked by my daughter to come and visit PP. I was not sure what Namaste was, but I agreed to come. I found it very helpful and I have enjoyed it very much. I feel much better when I am with PP. I like to talk to her and to share stories with her. I feel very much at home in her house.’

Q. What has changed for you?

PP: ‘I feel much better when Amina is here. I like to talk to her and to share stories with her. I feel much better when I am with Amina.’

Q. What more activities would you like to do?

Amina: ‘PP used to make great food, so I often give her recipes to try. We have made onion bhajis and chicken curry. She still doesn’t eat as much as before, but she is more interested in the food now. I can see a difference in her mood and attitude.’

Q. How has it been with Amina?

PP: ‘I didn’t expect this on my first visit. I was in tears and so was AS’s wife, he opened his hand after I massaged it and he hadn’t done that for a long time, his nails were so long, he also said thank you to me in English and he usually just speaks Bengali – I can’t wait to get back in there next week!’

Deb (Namaste volunteer)

“Life work a job in a dementia ward
- the Namaste training and volunteering
I did with Newham Namaste Care helped me get this paid work”

Anna (Namaste volunteer)

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