



Social Science

Care Transactions

V/o:

Care transactions. You will hear about five different care situations. Those involved were asked to consider the transactions either in cash or kind that their caring relationships entail. During her marriage Diane Mallett has taken on significant care and responsibilities for her relatives. First she nursed her mother-in-law and then she began helping her brother-in-law Paul to lead an independent life. She continues to care for her father-in-law who lives next door.

Diane Mallett:

Oh I can't imagine being paid for it. It wouldn't actually make a great deal of difference to my life to be paid for it at this stage. I don't think it would have helped me make the choices that I made earlier on to know that I was being paid. I'd have felt obligated to do it and I've done it because I've chosen to do it.

V/o:

Diane feels she's evolved a very effective relationship with her father-in-law, Stanley.

Diane:

My father-in-law, his needs are becoming more great as he gets older, he's 79 this year, and he's probably lived with us for the seven years and in those years he's been a very strong member of the family group and held things together very well. We have family meals together and if I think that he's not, you know, eating properly or doesn't hygiene or food I will point those things out. I don't get into his house as often as I would perhaps like to do some cleaning, only when he goes on holiday do I have a really good spring clean and I would like to do more in that department. And he seems to manage his shopping quite well but I think that he could do with more help than he actually will let me do. He often feels that I do too much as it is and it's a real battle to do more for him, but there have been times when if we hadn't have been here and noticed situations I don't think that he'd be here now. He's had a lot of illness, he's got bronchial asthma, and he's very hard of hearing, in fact he's deaf without his hearing aids, so we are needed to do 'phone conversations and write letters for him, and keep an eye on him generally.

Stanley Mallett:

To put it bluntly she's like a child to me. She's my left hand and my right hand like, you know, 'cos I don'tyou see. As long as I've got a pair of legs I'm happy. I can only say that we help each other like, I might send them a bottle of rum in occasionally as a sweetener because she won't accept anything else, and I don't drink wine. I think we're a good team, aren't we?

Diane:

Yes, yes, we look after each other very well. If I wanted anything I'd only have to ask, wouldn't I?

Stanley:

Oh aye....my own way.

Diane:

If we want to go away for the weekend or for a week on holiday he'll always offer to have our dog. Now we love our dog; there are situations where it isn't easy to take her, or if we want to go out for the day we haven't got to rush back so that obviously saves on kennel fees, and he'll always pick up the post and look at, you know, check up on our teenage daughter, make sure she's alright.

V/o:

Like Diane, John Avery doesn't get paid for taking on caring responsibilities. He looks after his former business partner, Mr Asgar. A single parent himself John has spent a great deal of time supporting his friend and trying to get him more statutory support.

John Avery:

Well I treat him three times a day with cream, E45 cream, for the joint pains, ankle, fetch all his medicines, all his food, if he wants to go out anywhere I take him out and generally look after him in every way. I do all his shopping for his clothes and anything you care to mention. September, I think it was September, October, I'd been, it took me from March of last year to get his appeal through for an attendance allowance and disability allowance, and so now he gets income support, income support, disability and attendance allowance and it comes to about £157 a week. Money doesn't come into it because my money's his money, and his money is my money, always has been. When he was getting £75 or £70 on his pension and they wouldn't give him any extra at all, and I was getting about £120 then and then they knocked it off me because you're only allowed so much when you get child benefit and that, and whatever they give you above that they just take it away from you. The other thing is that's one of the reasons why you can't get invalid care allowance what you're talking because it's absolutely useless to people in my position, even if you were earning a wage they tax you on it, and when they give it to people like me on benefit they take it immediately pound for pound off you. It's a mutually beneficial friendship we've got, always has been. Nobody's exactly alike are they, and I'm like 25 years younger than him but I've listened to him and learnt a lot from him, I think he's learnt a lot from me.

V/o:

Unlike John, Enid Francis does get some statutory support for caring for her two sons with learning difficulties. A former nursing assistant, Enid says the financial impact of giving up paid employment has been profound.

Enid Francis:

I do think about it in that sense because I sort of think about it in this way that they're my children and it's my duty to look after them, but when you think about it, if they were normal I would look after them until they can look after themselves, and you know they're children, then they're young men, now they're adult they're men and I've got to be looking after them all the time. It's very hard work because if they were alright they would have got married, they would have been gone, I would have been out at work earning a living for myself, all my life is just revolved about them, but I'm not complaining because they weren't asked to be born, and I just look at it that it's my duty to do my best for them, so I just look on it as a part of my everyday work to look after them. The benefit that John and Martin get is they income support, disability living allowance, and attendance allowance. Those three benefits they get. Some of my friends they told me that attendance allowance they keep it for themselves, but I don't think it's enough what they're getting for me to take their attendance allowance, so what I do I use it for them for their board and lodge, their clothes and to take them out, like when they're on holiday I will take them to the theme park, or take them to the pub for a drink, which my husband doesn't know this because he doesn't like them drinking but my eldest, John, he likes his beer, so that's what I use the benefit for, and I do a little savings for them because I've got to think about the time when I'm not around. They'll need something to fall back on to, so that's what I use it for. As for the benefit I get I just use it for myself but one thing about this benefit that bothers me is when I reach the age of 60, I was told that that benefit will be stopped. I did some research about this and I'm not too sure but as far as I know this ICA will stop when I'm 60, and the only benefit that I'm going to get to care for three people is going to be £28 a week, and heaven's help me I don't know what £28 can do, and at the end of the day I've saved the Government I'm going to say pretty near a million pounds. So I must tell you I haven't got any relatives of my own, my husband has got plenty relatives and they are the best people, they are ever so good to me and my children and I've got a few good friends. I've got two friends who are like sisters to me, so I do get help from my friends and I'm one of those people who are very good with my fingers. I haven't got the time now but I do do dressmaking, a bit of sewing, I'm not boasting but I'm quite good at it and I do bake, so like they come here there'll be a lovely cake, maybe a carrot cake or a bit of fabric and I'll be

putting the tape measure around someone to make them something, but I must be honest with you the last two years I find it hard to fit things like those in, but my relatives and my friends they are not looking for pay.

V/o:

Like Enid, Sarah Fletcher has often had to call on her family for help in the past. She's a disabled student and now receives direct payments. This means she can buy her own support services.

Sarah:

I need help with, I've got problems like I can walk about but I can't do all the walking about during the day to do all the different things even though individually I could lots of them, you know, so I need help with washing and ironing, and I mean if I was at home I'd need help with pegging it out on the line, and I need with doing cooking, preparing meals and tidying up afterwards because another problem I have is I don't have that much energy so I need help with things for that reason as well more than I might do. I use a wheelchair so when I go out places I need help with getting around, and you know you, some of my help like, so that someone else, someone I employ can drive me instead of me having to do the driving as well. And with things like cleaning, and getting drinks and things throughout the day like fetching and carrying sometimes, well like tidying up and making the bed, changing the sheets, you know. And sometimes I have somebody help me wash and dry my hair.

V/o:

Getting enough statutory support to lead a completely fulfilling student life has not been easy.

Sarah:

They wouldn't cover help getting to and from lectures 'cos he said that's like academic needs so they weren't responsible for things like that, but what they have funded me for are 22 hours which were very hard, very hard to convince them that they had a duty to help fund ...help getting to social activities and being able to participate like, for instance if I go swimming, then I need somebody to help me get there and maybe help me inside the building pushing the wheelchair or going to the cinema, things like that.

V/o:

She employs community service volunteers who are also students at the university to provide her with care.

Sarah:

With the way it works at the minute, I've got two different people help me because they work five days out of seven. The way the university's arranged it one person helps me Monday to Friday and a different person on a Saturday and Sunday. It could be worked out so that there was, I think if I didn't get on with one of the people, then I could probably swap so that it was a different one, but maybe I'm not entirely sure because I'm still working around the same, they all live in the same halls as me at the minute because most of the students share in this scheme live in the same halls as me.

V/o:

Sarah doesn't pay these volunteers directly. The university takes her allowance and directs it to the CSV's organisation.

Sarah:

What the CSV's actually get paid is £24 a week pocket money and then they get their accommodation and food paid for, and then 'cos it's 22 hours CSV said we should pay them £10 for food as well, so that they've got a choice to eat something other than the canteen food when they want to, and the rest goes to the organisation for managing it.

V/o:

It's not always simple to describe the kind of caring role that these volunteers perform for individuals like Sarah.

Sarah:

Direct payments is for funding personal assistance, care, whatever you want to call it. I feel strange saying personal assistance but on the other hand I don't like just saying care because lots of it's not care, you know, I mean doing your shopping and doing your ironing it's not the same as say helping somebody get up and dressed in a morning, it makes it sound as if in a way you need more help than you do, you know.

V/o:

Alex Zinga also gets direct payments for her care. She feels the scheme has given her much needed choices and also works well for her carer, Katherine Shipley.

Alex Zinga:

I only really needed help in the middle of the day to start with but it got worse and I eventually needed obviously to be got up and washed and dressed as well, and put away again in the evening, that's like a rag doll, isn't it? To start with, as I say, social services they were giving you less and less time, that's the way it is with social services, so it was decided to farm me out to private agencies but you can never quite rely on them, it was really poor, the set-up was really bad, and they could never there by 8 o'clock in the morning for some reason or another so it was always 9 o'clock plus, which meant I was left at half past ten with my breakfast which, you know, half your day's gone so eventually it was suggested to me that I might like to take charge myself and use the direct payments scheme which had been set up pretty recently up here in Sheffield and I think in one or two other cities, and it's been absolutely brilliant in comparison because, you know, you're in the driving seat, you're in charge, you do the employing, you just feel empowered, it's much, much better in every way that I can think of. I don't want a lot more care, I don't want to feel that there are carers always here fiddling about and messing with me so, you know, that's the easiest way to sort of go in. I go into bed early so that my tea can be left with me and that's all done and dusted, if you see what I mean, rather than have somebody come round and give me my tea and then go away again and come back and put me to bed, you know, it just, it feels too much old lady for me. I did try the usual routes of job centred employment agencies, etcetera, that doesn't work very well, I've only had one answer. I've tended to find I get best responses from local post offices, shop windows, the newsagent's down the road, this sort of thing, because I really want local help, you see, and that's, I found that much better. It's been more difficult this last time, there have not been many takers, but I've at last got somebody again, and people tend to stay about a year or so. Katherine's two years but it's usually about a year.

Katherine:

I've quite like to have done it because looking after my mum after having a stroke, I mean I looked after her for I think it was a year, and I just thought that I'd like to help, be able to somebody that sort of couldn't help themselves as much, and as soon as I saw it I rang the same day, you know, well in fact when I got home, and that was it, it was good.

Alex:

There is a contract, yes, yes, it's best to keep it legal and keep it on a contract. In the past it was quite a simple contract. I'd been given, again from the wages centre, a more complicated contact for people to fill out now just to sort of safeguard against legal proceedings. I usually find I'm quite intuitive myself, I usually find if people are getting on with me I ask all sorts of daft questions like what's your star sign, but I feel that's sort of important as well, and you get a feel about people. Sometimes it's jokey and friendly, and sometimes I'm a bossy boots and I lay down the law, you know, it just depends the mood I'm in. I always warn people at interview that I'm a slave driver and, you know, they're expected to work when they're here, and I don't allow, Katherine likes to smoke, I don't allow her to smoke in here, not that she would, she smokes outside on the step all weathers.

Katherine:

It's good, I mean the relationship, I mean you all have your ups and downs like, but I mean it's just like going to your friend's, I mean I can tell her things that I wouldn't even tell my own mother, you know, and it's a good relationship I think.

Alex:

Well we just jolly along and sometimes we talk, we tell each other rude jokes or whatever, you know, we keep it light. I mean there's nothing worse than somebody washing your backside and being completely glum about it as one lady was, and eventually sort of had enough and she had to leave. The young woman who took over for a short while had said I've got to be careful with my back, I need to tell you, and I thought mmm, it's just as well she doesn't want to stay in this job because it's not going to work because I'm a good nine and a half stones, and it's a matter of confidence, knowing exactly what you're doing, gripping with the knees, a quick swift upward push, twist and down, and you're not actually carrying the weight of the personal at all, though that is awkward, it is tricky at the bottom of the stairs with the stair lift.

Katherine:

It's physically hard work and tiring but not all the time. It's sometimes when I do a three-shift day which is like morning, lunch and at night, that can be a bit tiring sometimes, but other than that it's fine.

Alex:

I think I give quite a lot in return, sometimes it's quite wearying, because I'm much more assertive than these ladies, I really am, and I find it quite hurtful that they sell themselves so low, they sell themselves cheaply, you know they allow themselves to be trodden on, or so it seems to me, they're the drudge in the house thing, they put food on the table, and then they come out and work with me and they're doing a similar sort of job, and it seems unfair.