About this story

This case study highlights the importance of active listening and asking better questions. It explores alternative service delivery to the traditional model of providing client shopping. It illustrates how social connectedness and independence can be maximised.

Making Kevin angry was the key to discovering his real wants. After asking him for the umpteenth time what kind of bread he wanted, Kevin finally snapped. ‘I don’t care what bread I eat,’ he said, ‘because I can’t see it anyway!’.

Kevin has macular degeneration, and on this particular day he’d had enough.

‘I don’t want to go to the supermarket,’ he continued, ‘because I pushed the trolley for 30 years when I went shopping with my wife’. So when asked what was important to him, Kevin pointed to the 17-year-old dog asleep on the floor in front of the heater, ‘Bas’.

Caring for his best mate

Kevin had been a ‘truckie’, as he described it, and Basil had been his constant companion on the long-haul trips up and down Australia’s east coast. Basil had his own health issues and Kev’s failing eyesight was hampering his ability to care for his best mate. This was a huge cause of stress for him.

After a long chat, it was agreed that Kevin’s goal was to make sure Basil had good care. Kevin led the way with the ‘how to’ of reaching his goal. He used to take Basil to the Pet Care Warehouse because it is a one-stop shop for Basil. He could see the vet there, buy quality food for Basil and, according to Kevin, ‘The bloke who works there understands what Bas needs’.

A community care worker who likes dogs and was happy to have Basil in her car, began taking both Kev and Bas to Pet Care. Kevin would stay and chat to ‘the bloke’ and Bas would get attention. The community care worker would do Kev’s shopping at the supermarket next door, then pick him up and take both of them home. Pet Care offered to home-deliver Bas’s food but Kevin looked forward to the conversation and company so he declined the offer. This started in August 2010 and now Kevin has the confidence and motivation to catch a taxi to Pet Care a couple of times a week for the chat and company. If Kevin’s shopping continued to be done independently of him, his interest and involvement in the community would never have happened.

Moving on

Basil passed away in April 2011. And, although Kevin is very upset, he has continued to go to Pet Care because he has an interest and a friend there. He has no intention of getting another dog because he is now a volunteer pet minder, which was organised by Pet Care.
Reflection

Matching the community care worker with the person in this case was an important strategy. It really focused on what is important to the person and not what was important for the service.

This story demonstrates the power of strong community connection.