

Connect

The voice of the people we help

ISSUE 3 September 2010

A day in the life of an Elizabeth Finn Care Caseworker by Laura Elliot, Caseworker



9am – I arrive at the office, and check through any emails or messages that have been sent overnight. I am the Caseworker for around 180 individuals and families, so some mornings this can take longer than others. As Caseworkers, we try to reply as promptly as possible, because we appreciate that many people we assist are going through difficult and challenging times.

10am – I take a phone call from a distressed lady. Her car failed its MOT yesterday, and without this transport she is isolated in her house and cannot get to important hospital appointments or do her food shopping. I arrange for funds to be sent to her from her grant, which will enable her to keep her car on the road.

11am – After a team meeting, I begin to process a new application. The Casework

Department receives around 75 enquiries a week, unfortunately not all of which meet our eligibility criteria. With this particular application we are able to proceed, and I arrange for one of our Volunteer Visitors to go and meet the family. This is an important part of our application and review process, as some people find it easier to talk in person than over the telephone. In the cases where Elizabeth Finn Care can't provide assistance, we will refer the applicant to Turn2us, a free website and Helpline which Elizabeth Finn Care runs, where they can carry out a search for other sources of funding.

2pm – Our daily post arrives, and I sort through all the paperwork. I have received a number of letters requesting funds, which I arrange to be sent out tomorrow as we have already processed our cheques today. I have also received some information from Local Authorities and Benefits agencies – this means that I can complete a number of annual

reviews for the people that I work with who are receiving support from Elizabeth Finn Care, as I have been waiting for this confirmation of their benefits to come through.

4pm – I leave the office to carry out an annual review visit to one of the people we help. I have been visiting this lady for the past three years, and it's lovely to see how she is getting on. Through our conversation, I'm able to pass on important information to her Caseworker about her current needs. Her mobility has deteriorated since my last visit, and we speak about the possibility of Social Services providing her with some home-help. The lady explains how much her relationship with Elizabeth Finn Care has improved her quality of life, and leaving with this knowledge is a positive way to end the working day.

The Casework Team: the faces behind the phonecalls





Welcome

Dear reader,

Well, another summer has gone by and we've found our way to September already.

A great many things have happened here at Elizabeth Finn Care over the past six months. In May, we welcomed a new Chief Executive – Matthew Sykes CVO – to the charity. Matthew joins us from the British Army, where he held the rank of Major General. Under his leadership, we are continuing to provide the same levels of care and support to the thousands of people we help every year.

We were very grateful to receive so many of your questionnaire postcards in response to the last issue of Connect. It was wonderful to read your feedback. Many of you told us how much you'd like to hear from other people receiving help from the charity. We're only too happy to

oblige, and hope you will like our new Letters Corner.

Another request which a number of our readers made was to hear a little more about the people who work here in Hammersmith. We hope you'll enjoy reading about Laura, one of our Caseworkers, and will find the photograph of the Casework Team interesting for putting faces to the phone calls and letters you receive from us.

I hope that this copy of Connect finds you well. As always, we welcome any suggestions of how we can make it more relevant to you.

Bryan Clover
Director of Casework

Contact Details

If you would like contribute to the next edition of Connect, or if you would prefer to receive your copy as a Word document, please contact Anna Pietrowski on anna.pietrowski@elizabethfinn.org.uk or on 020 8834 9293.

If you have any enquires relating to the support and help you get or could get from Elizabeth Finn Care, please contact Case Enquires at enquiries.casework@elizabethfinn.org.uk or on 020 8834 9200.

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www.turn2us.org.uk

Your stories

After reading Alex Scott's article in the last issue of Connect, Steve Dickens felt compelled to share his own story in the hopes that it might show other readers that there are many other people out there who sometimes get in to tough situations and need a little extra help. Here, he tells us why you should never be afraid to ask for the support you need...

*Models used in photograph



“When my eldest son was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome my life changed forever. With my wife also suffering from a serious illness – and with five children all under the age of ten – I was forced to give up work as a nurse and lecturer in order to stay at home and care for my family. I knew that helping my son cope with the challenges of Autism would be difficult, but I figured that the skills and disciplines I had learnt throughout my years in nursing would have stood me in good stead. However, what my training could not help me to prepare for was the sense of isolation that an unexpected change in circumstances can bring.

My wife and I do not live close to our families and we do not own a car, so paying visits to loved ones was often out of the question (especially as my eldest son, as a consequence of his condition, finds it almost impossible to use public transport). The indifferent attitude of our creditors to our situation – something I am sure many

readers are familiar with – only made me feel more isolated and at odds with the world. Threats of repossession and calls from bailiffs became a dreadfully routine feature of our lives.

When my wife's healthcare advocate suggested to us that Elizabeth Finn Care might be able to alleviate some of our hardships we decided to apply, and later, we were accepted. Admittedly, I was reluctant to receive any support at first; it seemed that, being used to giving help and advice all my life, I was now finding it hard to accept any for myself.

Now, however, I cannot deny that the financial support Elizabeth Finn Care gives us makes an enormous difference to our lives. The biggest benefit has been that we now have access to transport, and so we are able to see our families, go for days out and attend hospital appointments for both my wife and son, without it being a stressful experience and logistical nightmare. I am so glad that I

swallowed my pride, as Elizabeth Finn Care has had a hugely positive impact upon my family's life.

The message of my story is directed to those members of the Elizabeth Finn Care family who are, like me, newly enrolled. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't sit in isolation like I did, becoming increasingly bitter as the days wear on. Of course, we all have 'off days' and feel sometimes that things will never improve, but it is at times like these when a phone call can make all the difference. At Elizabeth Finn Care they are trained to help and can suggest alternatives if they cannot directly help you themselves. Get in contact – I'm sure you'll be glad you did. ”

If you would be interested in sharing your story in the media, please contact kellie.smith@elizabethfinn.org.uk or call 020 8834 9263 to find out more.

Letters Corner

Just a few of your comments about Connect, Elizabeth Finn Care and what's important to you.

- “These days I seem to get loads of verbose reading matter from various organisations; this was (refreshingly) as much as I wish to read!”
- “As well as helpful and informative, I found it very interesting and relevant. Connect leaves you looking forward to the next issue. Thank you EFC.”
- “The stories remind us that we're not alone. It can happen to anyone – no matter how hard you've worked.”
- “Thank you. I feel inspired to write about my experience and possibly produce something fit for your newsletter to express my deepest thanks.”
- “The heating cost tips were excellent. More practical ideas about how to save money please!”

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200 SHEPHERDS BUSH
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Ways to save: **the internet**

The internet can often seem like a daunting place. With technology evolving all the time and with all that jargon flying about, the very idea of sitting at a computer and getting online can be an intimidating one for some. In reality, however, the internet is actually very simple to use once you know how, and can be an invaluable money-saving resource.

- Having an internet connection at home can reduce household costs in ways that are not always immediately apparent. The internet can be used at home for things like watching TV, listening to the radio and making cheap phone calls; but you can also use it to compare prices and get the best deals on everything from gas and electricity to fridges, washing machines and holidays
- These days access to the internet is cheaper and more widely available than ever, and free internet access is probably closer to you than you think. For example, did you know that you can use the internet for free at your local library or at your nearest UK Online Centre?
- This October sees the first Get online week, from 18-24 October. There will be lots of events going on all over the country to help you get surfing the web. For more information, head to www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Get_online_week
- Turn2us – part of Elizabeth Finn Care – has made the most of the internet's increasing accessibility by making its website as user-friendly as possible. It has been designed to help you find appropriate sources of financial support, quickly and easily, based on your particular needs and circumstances. Turn2us' free online Benefits Checker and Grants search can be found at www.turn2us.org.uk
- If you'd like to learn more about how to make the most of computers and the internet visit www.ukonlinecentres.com or if you would like to find out where your closest UK Online Centre is call **0800 77 1234**.



Order your **Christmas cards** and help us to help more people in 2011

It's that time of year again – the nights are starting to draw in, the leaves are falling and it's not that long until Father Christmas comes a-calling...

Elizabeth Finn Care has a variety of Christmas cards available to buy direct from us. We have seven seasonal designs to choose from (examples featured below). Cards come in packs of 10 and prices start at £4 per pack. The proceeds from sales of the cards go towards helping us to support more people who are experiencing financial difficulties.



If you would like to receive a Christmas card order form, please contact us and we'll be happy to send you one in the post or via email.

Tel: 020 8834 9200

Email: emma.wilding@elizabethfinn.org.uk

or write to us at our London address (page 2).