

Participant L

Age range: older

Participant L was finding it difficult to get to the library. She relied on her husband for transport, as she has low vision. With further deterioration of her vision, she was no longer able to select her talking books, and her husband was unable to assist due to very poor literacy. Her home care support package provided minimal support – primarily around housekeeping – and although the package had been reviewed, she was waiting on approval for an increased package. She reported to her Complex Care worker that she was feeling isolated as most outings were around medical and health service appointments, who then referred her on to the Social Prescribing Library program.

The Community Connector initially arranged for a reading profile to be developed to determine reading preferences, and then organised with the local library for a monthly home delivery of suitable talking books. After a lengthy period of this arrangement, Participant L contacted the library to inform them her CD player was no longer working. The Community Connector made arrangements to provide a short-term loan of an Envoy device with reading material pre-loaded. Participant L later purchased her own Envoy device which the library continued to load with reading materials and deliver.

Further discussion determined that Participant L was frustrated in being unable to read mail and being without somebody who could regularly read such to her. A trial was arranged for a 'reading pen'. The reading pen proved satisfactory for a period until the volume was no longer sufficient for Participant L to hear. A fortnightly volunteer was then organised to visit Participant L to read mail, write on cards, and scribe correspondence where needed.

Participant L had also undertaken the process to be deemed legally blind, but her pension status had not changed. The Community Connector followed up on behalf of Participant L, and copies of the required reports were obtained, and the resultant pension status was updated.

The Community Connector introduced Participant L to the local Vision Self Help Group. This proved to be a regular opportunity for social outings with like-minded people.

Over time, the Community Connector also supported Participant L when her husband was diagnosed with a serious illness, arranging for support to have their hedge trees trimmed, and Vision Australia to install improved lighting, and providing a regular in-home social visit, enabling Participant L to freely discuss happenings and any concerns with a trusted confidant.

Summary of the outcome/impact:

- supported in her reading preferences and loved the portability and ease of the Envoy device which she could take with her when they travelled and/or when waiting at appointments.
- appreciated being connected with the Vision Self Help Group and attended when she was able to. Her husband was also welcomed into the group.
- was very happy with the advocacy provided to obtain a legally blind status which updated her pension status and assisted with obtaining an accessible parking permit.

Participant L's husband also enjoyed the regular social company provided by the volunteer, and valued the confidentiality displayed regarding their personal business and conversations.

There were no children to this relationship; however, Participant L's nieces were very connected with them but were unable to visit regularly due to distance. They were most grateful for the support, options and opportunities that the Community Connector was able to provide.

Lessons learned/Tips:

It took a number of visits to build rapport with Participant L and her husband and to gain an understanding of their style of communication, which could be referred to as 'bickering', but which was their form of amicable banter.

Although Participant L was originally referred for the needs of library access and social interaction, a number of other issues were identified, and addressed, which resulted in important outcomes that supported Participant L and contributed to her level of contentment.

Over the period of connection with Participant L, her situation and needs were reviewed and as needed, support was increased or decreased. This particular case is an excellent example of the need to maintain contact and to introduce more or different options as the situation changes.

There were differing time spans and visiting schedules across the course of the connection, relevant to the needs and situation of the participant.

The referrer of Participant L requested confirmation only that the client had been contacted by the Community Connector and that a potential intervention was in play. No ongoing feedback was required.

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Link:

www.campaspe.vic.gov.au/library

<https://www.plv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SP-Report-Final-Aug-2023.pdf>