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28th April 2020

COMMUNITY HUB HELPS KEEP LOVED ONES CONNECTED

A simple act of kindness by Pembrokeshire County Council employees has been hailed as a shining example of helping others through the current Covid-19 situation.

Nicola Cunningham and Rachel Gibby organised for a County resident to borrow an iPad to video call their partner of over 60 years who had been moved into a care home.

The resident had been making daily trips to visit before the lockdown and shielding made that impossible.

It was the first time the couple had been apart in six decades and the uncertainty of when they might see each other again was weighing heavily.

Nicola was working at the Community Hub – which helps organise support for Pembrokeshire residents during the coronavirus outbreak – when she made contact with the resident.

Nicola had been redeployed from her usual role at Haverfordwest Leisure Centre to the Hub, which was set up by Pembrokeshire County Council, PAVS, Delta Wellbeing and the Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Part of the Hub's role has been in supporting those who are on the Government's "shielding list" - the population considered at highest risk from Covid-19.

These individuals are in a higher level of isolation than most and require additional support.

The Hub team make and receive a high number of calls from people who are shielding and provide support tailored to the needs of the individual.

The Hub also works alongside Welsh Government to arrange the delivery of food items to those who are shielding.

Nicola was making a routine call to 'check-in' with the resident who is among those shielding.

Nicola had discussed and organised a range of different support and in the closing comments, asked if there was anything else she could help with.

It was then that the resident explained the situation with her partner and Nicola got to work, speaking with a number of colleagues within the Hub team including Rachel Gibby, Development Officer for Care Home Services.

Rachel identified an iPad that could be made available to the resident to enable family members to Facetime (video call) their loved one.

The iPads had been purchased through the West Wales Care Partnership with grant funding from the Welsh Government Transformational Fund.

Rachel set up and delivered the device to the resident and liaised with the care home staff, who were very supportive, so they could receive the calls and link the couple together again via technology.

There have been a number of successful calls since then.

The resident has thanked the Hub staff and said how lovely it was to see their loved one again and hear their voice.

Nicola said: "I usually support people with physical exercise, which releases endorphins that make you happy. But now when I speak to people via the Hub I often find that by the end of the conversation we are both laughing, so I'm happy in an entirely different way.

"I was only able to help this resident because we'd built up enough trust over the phone that they felt they could ask for help."

Rachel said: "It is at times like this that I feel honoured to do the job that I do. It enables me to support someone in our community who needed a little help and to work with a team of people across the Local Authority and partner organisations - people willing to think outside the box to support people in our communities to have better support experiences."

Christine Harrison, Pembrokeshire County Council Head of Strategic Joint Commissioning, Social Care & Housing said: "This is a moving story and a prime example of why we feel the programme of work we are developing through the Transformational Fund project is so important.

"Being able to connect loved ones at such an emotional time is vitally important and I feel privileged to play a small part of in this initiative."

Tessa Hodgson, Council Cabinet Member for Social Services, said: "This is a shining example of the great work being carried out on a daily basis by the Community Hub.

“This small act of thoughtfulness and kindness will make a massive difference to the lives of this resident and their partner in what are very difficult circumstances right now.

“My thanks go out to the Community Hub team and everyone working hard every day to help others.”

The Community Hub can be contacted on: E-mail: communitycovid19@pembrokeshire.gov.uk Telephone: 01437 776301

More details on the Hub can be found at: <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-community-information/community-hub>

Caption

Nicola Cunningham.

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