

Carol's story

- Carol and her partner are helping to look after Carol's mum who has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Her mum needs a nebulizer to help her breathe more easily
- Carol's mum has gone into sheltered housing which is in another town
- Carol tries to visit her regularly but she has a part time job and two young children to look after.

Ever since Dad died, we have been torn about what to do with Mum. We have done our best over the last two years but our big worry was that being isolated and not very mobile in the countryside was likely to send Mum into depression. Getting a place in sheltered housing seemed like a godsend at first. Also, the sheltered housing is so much nearer to the local shops and the post office so we are hoping she will be able to make friends soon.

What is so confusing is that we still don't know how best to support her from a distance – due to Mum's condition, it's important that she does not get anxious but at the moment anytime there is a problem, she's still on the phone to me.

But what can I do from a distance if the window handle is broken and she can't close the window? Eventually, when I got onto the housing officer, I was told it could be up to a week before they would be able to send someone around. But the repairer didn't show up on the day expected (perhaps he was too busy) and came the following day when mum had gone out! Mum's kept phoning me up worrying about burglars. Equally worrying has been the huge amount of dust that's been coming out of the building work in a neighbouring property. Mum's condition can be life threatening and requires a dust free environment.

Another concern is that as she gets tired very easily, she doesn't seem to bother about making a balanced meal and has lost a bit of weight. A friend told me that COPD patients can stop their symptoms from getting worse by doing gentle exercises regularly, going to relaxation classes and doing other therapeutic activities – but who to ask or how to arrange this?

One of our biggest worries is what will happen if she had far to go, became breathless and had a fall? I wish there was someone local who I could rely on or she could befriend to help out with transport, shopping and emergencies when I am not able to respond quickly.

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questions:

1. why is Carol so worried?

2. what might have helped Carol before her Mum moved into sheltered housing?

3. how might the housing officer now help Carol to deal with her situation?

4. as a housing department, how sensitive are we to carers issues?

5. how could I, or my organisation, support carers with housing concerns in a more effective and sensitive way?
