

Worksheet 2

Healthcare Social Worker – Carer Assessment: Susan and Grace

Summary

Susan is 70 years old. She is primary carer for her partner, Grace, who is 82. In their younger days Susan and Grace travelled widely, they had a large network of friends and although they don't have any children of their own, they have nieces and nephews. Susan is particularly close to her nephew Graham. Grace has generally taken the lead in decisions and in the relationship. Sometimes now she gets angry with Susan if she doesn't do things the way Grace expects or if Susan makes a suggestion which Grace sees as 'stupid.' Grace's family have at times struggled with her sexuality and while her relationship with her nieces and nephews is good, her relationship with her brother Clive has been more difficult.

Over recent years Grace has become increasingly frail and has relied on Susan to wash and dress her, support her to use the toilet, as well as maintain the home and cook meals. Two months ago, Grace had a fall and was admitted to hospital. She was discharged to a rehabilitation bed in a care home. Before the hospital admission Susan and Grace were not in contact with services. Whilst in hospital and the care home, Susan has visited every day and helped Grace with personal care. Grace frequently phones and texts Susan. After six weeks of rehabilitation, Grace continues to need support to walk and with all her personal care, including support at night. You have been involved in a multi-disciplinary assessment which has recommended that Grace needs 24-hour care. As part of this assessment, Susan talked about how exhausted she is, and said that she no longer feels able to support Grace at home because of the impact on her health. Grace has agreed to a trial three months in a care home.

Susan and Grace are not legal partners, as they have not entered into a civil partnership nor are they married. Susan has no power of attorney for Grace. Susan is worried about the costs of a home and how this will be paid for. She feels guilty about 'letting Grace down' and sad about the future she will no longer have with Grace. Susan is also worried about Clive's reaction.

Susan has asked to speak to someone about her concerns. You meet with Susan and do an assessment and support plan.

The things Susan does as a carer to support

Before Grace went into hospital, I used to support her throughout the day and night. Now I go to the care home after breakfast and stay until Grace goes to bed. Grace often rings me when I am not at the home including in the night.

This is what I generally do:



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- *I launder Grace's clothes and bring them in – Grace is meticulous about her appearance – very stylish.*
- *I take Grace to the toilet during the day – she needs support to be able to use the toilet and it is important to her that I do this.*
- *I remind Grace about her medication and help her to take the correct ones at the right times.*
- *I help Grace to go down to meals in the home – I bring in some food for her which I cook from her favourite recipes*
- *Grace likes us to watch films or TV recordings together, especially documentaries. We usually manage at least one programme a day together. She likes me to keep her informed about what's going on in our political networks. I bring in books and local information, international news items, and read to Grace. I try to find things that interest her to bring in every day.*
- *I help Grace to get undressed and showered in the evening – she likes to feel fresh at the end of the day.*
- *When I get home, I sort things out there and get things ready for visiting the next day.*

When Grace was at home I also:

- *Helped Grace to get washed and dressed in the morning.*
- *Did all the shopping, meal preparation and cooking – Grace is a good chef and explained how things need to be done.*
- *Arranged Skype calls with friends for Grace.*
- *Helped Grace to have a bath each evening – we don't have a shower.*
- *Helped Grace to the toilet in the night, usually a few times.*
- *Fetches things for Grace in the night if she wasn't able to sleep.*
- *Arranged any medical appointments and collected medication.*

How does Grace's needs impact Susan's life?

The last year or so has been very difficult. I have done my best to support Grace and this has gradually made me more and more tired. I have been feeling unwell due to the lack of sleep and am always exhausted.

I worry about letting Grace down but I cannot do all that she needs me to do at home. Even with help coming in, there would be so much time when it was just me. Grace has said that she will try a care home and I think this is best. However, I feel guilty every time I leave her.

Even while Grace has been in hospital, and now in the reablement home, I seem to be as busy as ever. Grace is anxious about being in the home so I visit every day. The food is definitely not up to Grace's standards – so I try to prepare something fresh to take in for her every day. Grace phones or texts me when I am not there and sometimes during the night. It is very stressful being 'on call'. She forgets that I may be asleep or driving to see her.



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I used to like going to the cinema and I wanted to get involved in a “University of the Third Age” group which I saw is exploring the history of film. I would like to travel and carry on with campaigns. At the moment I am too tired to do more than visit Grace and I don't want to let Grace down by not being there for her.

It feels like my future is very bleak. We were planning to do so much more but all that has faded away along with Grace's health. I feel like I have already lost her in a way. I miss the relationship that we had. Grace gets frustrated and she can lash out with her tongue. She gets quite angry if I don't get it right. I know she doesn't mean it but it does hurt and I don't know who to turn to. Some of the staff in the home seem quite uncomfortable around us and some have made comments that I find quite oppressive.

My sister passed away last year and I miss her. Grace's brother, Clive, is hard work – he's very domineering. I'm concerned about his response if the decision is made for Grace to go into a care home for good. He has always expected me to cope no matter what – his attitude is that I've 'made my bed and must lie in it'. He expects me to continue caring for his sister as “that's what I would have to do if I was Grace's husband”.

Information, advice and support

- 1 I'd like someone to discuss my concerns with and talk things through, so I feel reassured I am making the right choices, for both of us. I must get it right.*
- 2 I'd like to not have to repeat my story and keep having to explain our relationship. I'd like to be able to stay over with Grace and feel free to visit when I and she want.*
- 3 Good communication between all the professionals. An explanation of everyone's roles, and one person to co-ordinate it all. I'd like to know who to contact and who there is to help me.*
- 4 Grace needs looking after properly and professionally but I don't know how I can pay for everything to keep our shared home going and sort out her care. Being clear about how the care home is going to be funded will help.*
- 5 Confidence in the paid carers doing their job properly, that they know what equality actually means.*
- 6 Grace to have access to the internet so that she can keep up with her interests when I am not there.*
- 7 I need expert professional advice about looking after Grace's affairs, our home – which belongs to her, and our finances.*
- 8 Having someone to attend meetings with me, be my advocate.*
- 9 I don't know how to cope with her brother's response. I'd like help with this, and support from the family with this.*

