

The training course I'm on with Buz hasn't even finished yet, but already it's having a really positive effect on my staff and service users. For example, following an exercise on one of the training days and an assignment shortly afterwards I decided to do some further work with Maureen (not her real name), a tenant in extra care housing.

Maureen is 82 years old, a tiny South African lady with dementia. She has no family to care for her and no visitors at all. After getting together with her key worker we decided to make an event of her birthday the following week, just do some of the special things a close family member might do. Firstly she was taken shopping, for the first time in years. She touched and smelled the fruit from her native country, chose what she wanted and paid for it herself. She was quite overwhelmed by something so simple. She cried and said "I didn't think anyone would do this for me".

Word got around that the following day was Maureen's birthday and so lots of tenants attended coffee morning. Maureen's key worker brought her into the lounge where everyone sang Happy Birthday. There was a birthday cake, balloons and a huge bunch of specially ordered South African flowers. Maureen burst into tears and hugged her key worker, she then went round every single tenant and kissed them saying she couldn't believe this was all for her.

As well as clearly having an effect on Maureen, who for the first time in ages felt as though she was someone special, this small event had a profound effect on staff. We were all overwhelmed by her reaction and had tears in our eyes. One staff member said it felt like the best days work done in a long time.

Now the staff are incredibly eager to learn more, try new things and improve life for the tenants who have dementia.

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