

## Voices of North Yorkshire – Karen podcast transcript

I have lived in North Yorkshire for 42 years on and off. Originally from Doncaster, I spent a few years down south before moving to North Yorkshire with my parents. I lived in Leeds for 12 or 13 years and so my family and friends are all split between Leeds and Scarborough. I am currently a carer for my mother who has dementia, safeguarding her personal care and helping her to be happy, stimulated and healthy. I do my best.

Being a full-time unpaid carer can sometimes be lonely and I often feel isolated.

We live in a rural area where transport is difficult - I don't drive and the buses are unreliable. On top of this, mum can't be left unsupervised as she has dementia. We don't have a reliable internet connection, so connecting with others digitally is difficult.

The village we live in is not at all that friendly and we don't have any amenities on the doorstep, which leaves me feeling isolated and extremely lonely.

As a carer, you are emotionally and physically drained. As we don't have the input of social care, because they didn't meet our needs, this makes the isolation worse.

As mum requires constant supervision and occasionally leaves the house if unattended, the front door is mostly locked or secured, further compounding the feeling of social isolation and loneliness.

I feel cut off from the rest of civilisation because of Coronavirus, the lockdown and the new normal. It has increased the sense of loneliness and social isolation due to restrictions around social distancing and care support.

What little support we had before has been ripped away from under our feet and I've been left feeling abandoned, lonely, isolated and forgotten about. It is affecting our mental health and well-being – I'm only human, not super-human.

The suspension of day care facilities, the sitting service, the drop in cafes and activity groups has meant that I no longer am able to have "breathing space" from my caring role and I am unable to go shopping or continue with the Action Towards Inclusion scheme. For both of us, the lack of socialising with friends and family has left us with really no contact with the outside world. I feel like I have done something wrong. I feel that people don't understand that you can't get a break, especially if it's just you on your own. With the ongoing restrictions, I feel that I am expected to deal with this situation for months, if not years, without practical help and support.