

Maureen's story

Name of service: Continence Advisory Service

Main purpose of service: a team of specialist clinicians who assess and advise on bladder, bowel, pelvic floor and vaginal health. The team supports other health professionals giving them advice about continence care and catheter management.

About the person: Maureen is 79 years old and has had a varied career, working in an Oxfam sorting depot and as a carer for social services. She wants more people to talk openly about continence problems and hopes that sharing her story will encourage others to step forward for expert advice.



Bladder control:

Maureen explains, **“I had started wearing thin pads and gradually they had become thicker. It was costing me an arm and a neck!”** She describes how she often felt she needed to go to the toilet to have a wee, when she didn't really need to. **“It can be in your head! You think you need one, but you don't really. It's a feeling that you need to go and then you think you better had, just in case. But I know now, to not go until you really need to. The bladder can hold a lot!”** Maureen admits, she had been referred to the Continence Service before, but as time went on, she hadn't continued with the pelvic floor exercises they had taught her. Maureen was re-referred and was sent a diary to fill in prior to the first appointment. **“I cancelled my appointment. I told myself I was OK. I knew I needed it, but I put it off.”** Eventually, Maureen rearranged the appointment and completed her paperwork. She was seen by Shirley, one of Locala's Continence Nurses. Maureen says the exercises don't take much time, **“You do them four times a day. You have to sit on a hard surface – it helps you feel you are doing them – some are done slowly and some fast.”** Shirley also advised Maureen to drink more. **“You have to drink plenty of water.”**

Improvement:

After two to three weeks, Shirley noticed a difference. **“I'm delighted. It's a massive thing. When you do the exercises, the rewards are amazing. To do a proper wee! The freedom you get when you don't need to wear pads!”** Maureen can now go four to six hours between toilet visits. **“I went shopping to Barnsley and didn't even think about going to the toilet. I was proud of me!”**

Advice and support:

Maureen liked Shirley's approach. **“She's great. Straight to the point. No messing about. You know what you have to do. I admire that. She's brilliant.”** Maureen saw Shirley at the clinic in Fartown and then they spoke on the phone, **“It makes such a difference when you can sit and chat with someone about it.”** When Maureen had a set-back, Shirley reassured her. **“She told me, 'you know what you need to do'.”**

Maureen spoke with Joanne Vaughan from Locala's Engagement Team on 27 June 2023 and gives full consent to share her patient story.