**Hannah’s Story**

Hannah was referred to Care for Carers by the Neighbourhood Support Team. She was a 22-year-old single mother to a two-year-old daughter and cared for her grandmother (who had raised her from infancy after her mother passed away). Her grandmother had a stroke in 2004 and suffered from COPD. Hannah left full-time employment as a chef three years ago to provide care on a full-time basis and covered all aspects of caring including personal care, dispensing medication, food preparation and managing finances.

Hannah was interested in general carer support and possible life coaching, and when we first met she presented as a very ‘closed’ young woman, almost to the point of showing no emotion. Hannah felt she had no life of her own, she was unable to have friends round to the house and she didn’t go out either as she didn’t want to leave her grandmother on her own. Both Hannah and her grandmother were in receipt of benefits and did not have any money to spare.

While her grandmother was in hospital, the nursing staff suggested Hannah purchase a device that would monitor her grandmother’s oxygen levels, so she could inform the district nurses of any changes. Staff said that if required her grandmother could be treated while at home and that could potentially prevent her reaching crisis point and needing to be re-admitted to hospital. Care for Carers contacted the Impact Team to ask if they would supply the device as Hannah could not afford to purchase it and they advised that the equipment was expensive and as her grandmother had previously refused to comply with the policy agreement, i.e. she refused to stop smoking, they could not supply the equipment. We referred Hannah to other agencies to help her with finance and budgeting and for specific training with her caring role and at this point she also became interested in working as a support worker.

Hannah was experiencing a considerable amount of family-related stress from other family members and had to attend court to give evidence against her aunt, who had been charged with assaulting Hannah and smashing her car. She was very stressed about having to go to court and worried that there would be further trouble. The Community Safety Team were aware of the situation and were working at the time to relocate Hannah and her daughter. Despite all of this, as our carer support appointments continued, we saw a real change in Hannah - she began to show emotion and talk more openly, and we were able to really see the real Hannah shining through.

Hannah was on a high dose of antidepressants when we first met and was keen to change this, so we supported her to access the Positive Mental Training programme, which we regularly promote to carers, and we will be reviewing how this has helped her when we next meet. We also helped her with an Edinburgh Leisure membership so she could enjoy some exercise and time to herself.

Hannah’s grandmother was admitted to hospital where she sadly passed away, and we continued to support Hannah through her bereavement. We also referred her to Link Up, where she was receiving counselling.

Hannah began applying for jobs after her grandmother’s death but didn’t have the funds to purchase interview clothing, so we encouraged her to access a “swap shop”. Here, she obtained suitable clothes for the two interviews she had secured. She was offered both jobs and was able to accept the one that suited her personal circumstances better. Hannah is now employed as a paid carer and is loving her job, but she is still interested in life coaching, which she was about to start when her grandmother was admitted to hospital.

Care for Carers have continued to emotionally support Hannah since the death of her grandmother and have also supported her find a new home - she now lives with her daughter and partner. It has been a privilege to support this young woman and to see how she has coped and transitioned through the many difficult situations she has faced at such a young age.