



**Family Carer:** Jean Davies  
**Age:** 75  
**Cared For:** Kevin  
**Situation:** Out of County in Residential  
**Age:** 50  
**Other children:** One daughter

**Years of Caring:** 50

### **“Am I ever going to get him back in to county? I just don’t know”**

Jean is 75 but is ‘not ready to be old yet’ and certainly ‘doesn’t feel old’. She was born in the North East and moved with Kevin to Oxfordshire twenty years ago to be nearer to her daughter, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Jean does not really consider herself to be a family carer – for her when your son or daughter is born ‘you are Mam forever’. Kevin has also been living out of county for the last 10 years and even though she sees him every weekend and they talk every night she sees this as been different to those family carers who are still supporting their family member at home.

Kevin was born with a club foot. He had to have splints which meant a lot of visits to the hospital. Looking back, Jean realises that the doctors did try to tell her that he had more than just an issue with his foot but she kept making what she felt were logical excuses as to why he was not reaching milestones. It was only when he had a seizure at nearly 12 months and was rushed to hospital that she accepted he had a learning disability. “He wasn’t perfect but he was to me” and when asked if she wanted to keep him or send him away she had no hesitation. “You don’t voluntarily give your children up” – “he is still my boy”! This makes it doubly hard for Jean to have Kevin living out of county as for her ‘Kevin was never leaving home!’

The best thing to Jean about being a family carer is the ‘love you get’. Kevin brings her copious amounts of joy and happiness and she would not swap him for the world. She loves everything about him but in particular his smile especially when he has been naughty and found out. They particular enjoy their holidays together and every year go on a cruise.

The worst is the ‘worry and uncertainty when you are no longer around” and how Kevin will cope when she is no longer there. With Kevin out of county Jean’s daughter has already told her that she will not be able to see Kevin every weekend as Jean does now and that it would be easier if Kevin lived nearer. “Am I ever going to get him back in to county? I just don’t know”. Visiting Kevin means a 3-hour journey by public transport but nothing stops Jean from making that journey every two weeks.

For Jean the difficulties of raising a child with a learning disability only really started for her when she became a single parent and moved down South. Kevin was settled and happy in Newcastle attending day services but in Oxfordshire Jean had to start all over again. It was difficult to get him a place anywhere and she only achieved it by standing outside the relevant buildings and harassing people. Twenty years on and she feels not much has changed with families still continually having to fight for everything.

Her advice to other family carers in the same situation is to ‘keep on daintily plodding and don’t let them win!’. This approach led her to becoming involved in the provision of services for those with learning disabilities within the county including supporting the day services,

Treasurer for the local Mencap charity and sitting on the Carers Voice panel. She enjoys what she is doing and is the first to admit that her involvement now has all come about as a result of having a child with a learning disability. If it hadn't have been for Kevin, Jean 'would never have known about disability'. She continually raises the need for family members to stay close to home.

Her hopes and dreams for Kevin is that she hopes he will continue to be happy and cherished.