

SCENARIO: BARBARA

Barbara is seventy-six years old and has lived alone in her own home in a village since her husband died four years ago. She has one son, who now lives with his wife and three children 310 miles away from Barbara. A usually outgoing woman with a positive outlook on life, until her retirement, eleven years ago, she worked as a teacher in her local primary school, knowing many families in the area and often stopping to chat with them. Since then, these schoolchildren have grown to adulthood and a number of new families have moved into the area. Barbara and her husband had been regular attenders at a ballroom dancing club once a week and had also enjoyed coach trips around the UK and Europe, with an increase in trips since their retirement. Barbara had never needed to learn to drive, as her husband drove their car. Since her bereavement, Barbara has stopped her dancing activities, as they reminded her of her loss. Although she has the financial means to afford holidays, Barbara no longer takes coach trips, as she has no-one to travel with. Most of her close friends are of a similar age and are either unable or unwilling to travel far from the local area. Barbara does meet with a couple of older close friends, but these visits are becoming less frequent; her friends have children and grandchildren living locally and they spend much of their time with those family members. Recently, Barbara has relied more on her television and radio for company, along with occasional phone calls from her son and grandchildren. She does not like to phone her son too often, as he is frequently busy with work, so she has begun waiting for him to phone her. Sometimes a few weeks can go by with no call from him. With few reasons to leave the house, other than brief shopping trips and medical and dental appointments, Barbara spends time tending to her garden and reading, but she has noticed that she increasingly feels tired and cold in the afternoons, often needing a nap. She now routinely goes to bed by nine o'clock in the evening, as she feels warmer in bed. Barbara misses the community feel of the village when she knew almost everyone and felt seen by people, who would ask how she was. She now feels lonely and left out of village life.