

Mirus celebrating Carers Week - Vee's story

Prepared to care?

As a part of celebrating Carers Week 10th – 16th June 2013, [mirus](#) a not-for-profit charity in Wales share the story of a carer who looks after her brother and sister. Being a carer is a way of life.



Carer Mrs Vee Lunagaria.

Mrs Vee Lunagaria from Lisvane, Cardiff cares for her brother Bhiku Patel (aged 52) and sister Rekha Patel (aged 49).

Vee has cared for Bhiku and Rekha, who have learning difficulties and bilateral hearing loss, for the past 10 years when caring became too much for her elderly parents.

Having an established life with her husband and son, it was a complete shock to suddenly be a carer for two adults requiring around the clock care. Vee was forced to reduce her working hours to part-time nightshifts so she could spend more time at home caring for her brother and sister. And even with a very supportive husband, Vee wasn't prepared for the extent of Bhiku and Rekha's daily needs. The continuous hospital appointments alone are a logistical nightmare!

The initial couple of years were very tough. Despite being professionally trained as a NHS nurse, Vee was unaware of support available and how to get the best from the 'system' for her brother and sister. It was only when a practice nurse at her local GP put her touch with an adult learning disability social worker, Vee discovered the possible support available.

Shortly after this Bhiku and Rekha started accessing Respite care at **mirus**. Vee says *"Although it was initially hard to trust other people to look after my brother and sister, mirus listened to my concerns and went out of their way to make sure Bhiku and Rekha were happy and achieved lots during their stay. And because care is personalised to my needs we all benefit from mirus respite breaks."*

But Vee feels that even with the internet, many people still aren't aware of the help, such as respite care, that is available.

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This year Vee will use respite to have time away with her husband and visit extended family in India. Vee feels that her brother and sister are also getting a holiday when they stay at one of the mirus residential houses in Cardiff. *“Bhiku and Rekha just love going there and they love the people who support them who have become like family.”* Vee also likes that Bhiku and Rekha get to do lots of different activities that they wouldn't usually do.

With increasing fuel and food bills, caring continues to have a huge impact on their finances and Vee admits that they have to make sacrifices. Vee also admits that the emotional impact can be overwhelming and struggles to maintain relationships with friends and family. *“Sometimes I feel the pressure and feel very isolated. That's when little things can become big issues.”*

Vee continues to support Bhiku and Rekha to live as independently as possible and says *“it's important to show that people with a learning difficulty can do more than just stay at home, because disability can be a taboo”*. Bhiku is now a competitive cyclist and in 2007 represented Great Britain in the Special Olympics in Shanghai, winning bronze medals in the 500m and 5k time trials. Rekha enjoys furthering her computer skills and has recently taken up a jewellery design class.

Ends

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Notes to editors



Vee Lunagaria with her sister Rekha Patel, and her brother Bhiku Patel.

1. Mirus

<http://www.mirus-wales.org.uk/carers/>

<http://www.mirus-wales.org.uk/respice/>

Everyday someone supported by mirus achieves a life goal. We're proud of this because it's what we do – we enable people with a disability to turn a possibility into a reality. mirus is a not-for-profit charity providing specialist support to children and adults of all ages with disabilities, autism, physical disabilities, dementia, mental health, complex health and complex need associated with behaviours that challenge.

2. Carers Week <http://www.carersweek.org>

Carers Week 2013 takes place from Monday 10 to Sunday 16 June. Carers Week is a UK-wide annual awareness campaign. Its aim is to improve the lives of carers and the people they care for. It does this by:

- Raising the profile of the role of caring in the national, regional and local media and encouraging groups and organisations to take part and organise events and activities.
- Helping the public identify themselves as carers and access the support, advice and information they need.
- Celebrating and recognise the contribution the UK's 6.5 million carers make to the people they care for and their communities.
- Highlighting the challenges of caring and campaigning for sustainable funding for services and support for carers and the people they care for.