

# Human rights led practice: Video 4

## Transcript

[Stanley Merton]

When I was 14 years of age, I started off as a butcher's boy. And when I was 18, I went into the Air Force. Up to, World War II, I had many different jobs.

[Mere Mitchell]

We decided to form the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau. And I was one of the volunteers there, and there I stayed. And as the place grew and needed a director, I became the director. And at the same time I did social policy with VCOSS and ACOSS, and was president of both of those organizations.

[Brian Byrne]

I worked for the post office. I was post master of Blackburn South which was only a very small office. But the people who I had coming in there, were fantastic customers.

[Carlene Murkin]

I still live at home. And I do all my own cooking. And I make cakes, and jam. I can still cut up fruit for jams. Some people have such arthritis in their fingers that they can't cut the, can't use them. I do gardening in two tiny little flower pots that are out there. I put in seeds sometimes, and then I transfer them over into a part of the garden that's left vacant.

[Stanley Merton]

I came here about 14 months ago and I thought that I'd have to stay around to look after my wife. She passed away three weeks ago and we'd been married 32 years. When my wife and I moved in here we sold our house, that sort of just leaves me with the pension and the war service pension as well. I'll probably stay here for the rest of my days, I don't know how long I've got, we don't know what's around the next corner.

[Mere Mitchell]

Eric my husband was a post-polio syndrome sufferer. And he had not been well for a number of years. We recognized that the time had almost come where we'd need somewhere else, and we looked for a place where I could live independently, and he could get the care he needed. And I came home one night, thought I was backing on to the bed but I wasn't. So I went straight down on the floor, broke my back and so I couldn't walk either. So we had to find somewhere for both of us. Eric's condition was not too bad for probably about three months and then he started to deteriorate quite a lot, and then he died, and then I sort of stayed on because I was in the state of not being able to walk at that stage.

[Brian Byrne]

You can't do anything else. You've got to accept the fact that you can't do what you used to do. I think that the people who find it hard are the ones who won't accept it.

[Brenda Pledge]

My aunt has been in here for five years now and she's 101 years old. She was in hospital for quite some time and then she was assessed. The assessment decided that she shouldn't be on her own. She's quite frail now at 101, but she needs showering, and help with dressing. She hasn't dementia, she's still doing the crossword puzzles every day in the sun. So her mind is very active, so she's quite aware of everything that's going on.

[Carlene Murkin]

I had to have someone wash me, and I'm reaching that stage again where I really am not safe in the shower. I hardly go into it, even though I have a seat and I sit there, but I can't wash myself properly.

[Stanley Merton]

I think I'm about the only one apart from the staff that have their own cars. My son of my previous marriage, he and I go out at least one day a week, we go out to lunch and have a beer. And we share the driving. I wouldn't like to be sort of sitting back and not doing any driving. So I'd say it's very important to me.

[Carlene Murkin]

And suddenly comes the day that you don't drive anymore. You want to make sure you live in the right place because if you're a long way from shops and services you've got to walk, or get a taxi, and a lot of people haven't thought of that. I was one of them.

[Stanley Merton]

Also my son, since my wife died, well he's been coming around more frequently and he's retired from work. That sort of helps a lot but I have to be sure that I don't take up too much of his time, I have to sort of balance things out a bit.

[Carlene Murkin]

I realized that I was in danger of falling over and when I was at the hospital one time they gave me a walking frame to walk up and down the hall. And one nurse said to me you can take that when you go. I don't always use it around the house, I can walk from one room to another but it is safer if there's any distance to go that you have the walking frame. Yeah sometimes you get helpers that come in and they talk down to a person as though they're talking to a little child, and you don't want that. You don't need it.

[Stanley Merton]

Well I'm nobody so they don't have to, they don't have to sort of show me any respect or any extra thought or anything like that. The staff are all very good here, they have their work to do and they have to be caring as well, it's not easy I'm sure. Well since my wife Judie passed away a lot of staff

that I'd only know them by sight and I'd say good morning, or good afternoon to them but they all come up and they want to give me a hug and tell me how sorry they are, and all that sort of thing. So it makes me feel as though I'm part of a family.

[Brenda Pledge]

Mainly staff that don't understand her, and I would say that it's lack of training.

[Carlene Murkin]

If they're less experienced you have to point it out that these are parts of the body that need, the other person to do it for you. Because you can't reach your own back satisfactorily, nor your own toes at this stage of life.

[Brenda Pledge]

They don't seem to have the empathy, when you're dealing with people of this age they are deaf, extremely deaf. A staff member will come in and perhaps say, what's on the menu for that particular meal asking her to choose, she has no idea, no idea what they've said. I think there's a lot of training needed, and also training with showering. Showering is a very big problem, Marian being 101 is very frail, her skin is very, very frail and if anybody has a ring on, or they hold her legs or her arms too tight she develops a bruise and that bruise in turn will break because her skin is so frail. And her description of having a shower, she feels like a horse sitting in a stall with somebody hosing her. And I think sometimes the staff are used to dealing with people with dementia and they don't realize that not everybody has dementia. If she presses a bell needing toileting she finds it very difficult she said, sometimes she's waited 15 minutes or more for somebody to come in and they open the door and say what do you want? And she'll say well I need the toilet. She cannot get out of bed on her own and they quite often will say we haven't time, we'll come back later. Well can you imagine that with 101 year old lady, that's just not on. People in the dining room of a night, they all have their set chairs where they sit and they know where they go and it's all very difficult getting them all seated and everything. But after they've finished their meal the carers disappear. They finish their meal and they think, oh I've got to go back to my room, how do I get my walker, I can see it over there but I can't get there, there's nobody to ask. They'll bring in a water jug and they'll put it over on a table and the beds there. And Marian, being 101 has all the old traits where she has a skin cream and she'll have a talcum powder. They have no idea what talcum powder is, where do you put it? I know one day Marian, she had been in hospital and they'd returned her to her room and when John and I arrived she was in her bed with the blind pulled down, and it was 11 o'clock in the morning, and she had a blanket on, and her doona. It was extremely hot in her room, not a window open, a heater on, and somebody had put her in her bed and wrapped her in all of her bed clothes. They hadn't been near her, she was absolutely dehydrated, she was delirious, it was just disgusting. And I sort of panicked and ran out to get somebody and this particular person said I don't work in that unit. And so I had to wait till I could get someone while my husband was holding her on the bed. And they finally got somebody and this person explained to me that the person who had put her into bed like that wasn't trained.

[Mere Mitchell]

I wasn't aware that I was becoming institutionalized, but my friends were, and my friends have talked about that since. That it didn't take them long to pick up the fact that I was becoming very compliant, sorry I'm gonna have to leave now to go back because it will be lunch in half an hour

was the sort of thing that they actually used as an example. I'm not quite so compliant now, but in those early days I guess I was another great example. Time for you to be going to bed. I do need help getting into bed, I'm sorry I've got to clean my teeth and go to the toilet. The staff member stood by the basin watching me clean my teeth to make sure I hurried up. You really haven't any personal dignity left, unless you demand it. I don't actually think that many of the staff understand what human rights really are. I always say I want my rights, that along with my rights comes my responsibilities.

[Charlie Edwards]

They become familiar with what's happening, they know the routines, they know their rights. Good on them, you know, we all have rights, they have rights and if they want to express their rights then that's fine, it should be fine. No one should ever take things personally if a resident has an issue then we should be looking at trying to address it, not taking it as a personal affront which some people tend, if they're not experienced, and even some of the experienced ones do take things personally. And we should all be taking it as an opportunity to correct the things that are wrong, and get it right for the resident. Like if we could all get it right for the resident then our days would be so much better, for staff as well.

[Narrator] Respecting human rights is the first step. Another part of the support workers role is to be an advocate for the human rights of the people in their care. Particularly for people who's disability or impairment makes it hard for them to advocate for themselves. And also for people who don't have family or friends to advocate for them.