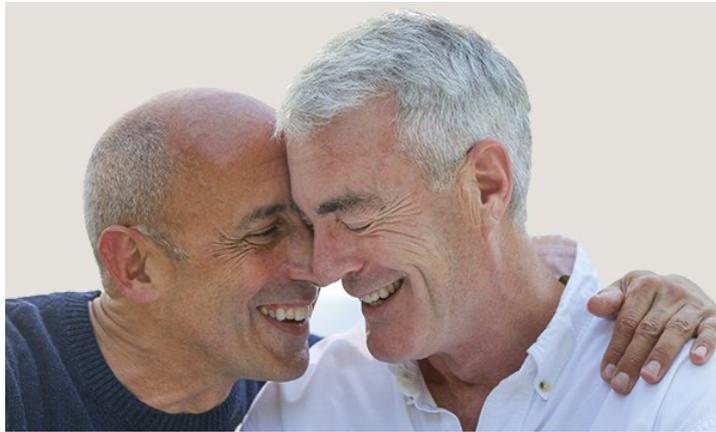


## Morgan and Alan:



### A story of love and support

Morgan and Alan have been a couple for 57 years, they got married in 2016. Morgan is Alan's unpaid carer. Here Morgan tells their story

- **When and how did you and your Alan meet?**

Me and Alan met in 1963. I had been in an unhappy relationship, and some friends of mine invited me out for tea and Alan was there, that was 57 years ago. We moved in together pretty quickly, and was living together by 1964. Our first home was in a shared house in Putney, from there we then made a home for ourselves in a rented house which we then brought together. We've been happy living together, we gelled quickly into being a couple. We were a very loving pair. It was always a loving relationship and then Alan moved in to a care home. Alan had to go in the end to the care home due to the risk he posed to himself and me, it was the last thing I wanted.

- **What has your life together been like?**

We always had straight friends, who were always very happy for us and accepting of our relationship. It was always Morgan and Alan together and they accepted that. Even before, and then after the law changed around Homosexuality our friends have been supportive. It was very traumatic for me when Alan went into the care home, I couldn't be without him so I then had to rely on my friends to support me. We got married a few years ago when we were able to, we were told by some friends of ours that it would protect each other if anything was to happen to the other one, we would be covered under law. Once we got

married, we went for a meal in our favourite restaurant in Covent Garden, which was lovely the staff knew us very well and there were roses round the restaurant and pictures, it was wonderful.

- **When did you start caring for Alan?**

I started caring for Alan a long time ago, around 2009. We were on holiday in Italy and I started noticing something was happening with Alan's memory. When we came home, we went to the GP they referred him to the memory clinic and they assessed him and told us that he had borderline dementia. For a long time after that Alan refused to get help, then after about two years he agreed to getting some help and he was diagnosed with dementia, he was then started on medication.

- **How your life changed when you started caring for Alan?**

Things remained fairly similar to what it was like before the diagnosis of dementia, we still went on holiday every year, saw friends but then in 2016 things changed with Alan. Alan's memory got worse, we stopped being able to go to as many places as before, and he became anti-social which was not like him at all. There were occasions that he hit members of the public with his stick on the street if they were in his way, and he would really struggle to go to supermarkets and places. Alan stopped being able to get on buses, and there was an occasion that he started screaming when I left him in our regular coffee shop to go and do a bit of shopping. Then one Friday Alan was verbally aggressive towards me, and I knew I had to do something so I spoke with the Alzheimer's society and with social services and Alan was then reviewed by the memory clinic. From there we then explored him going to a day centre for a while, but he started needing a lot more support so we agreed to look around a care home for him to stay in for a couple of weeks so I could have some respite. We went to look round the care home, had a coffee, but Alan refused to go unless Morgan came too, I did explain to him that he was staying there to give me a rest. In the end I ended up supporting Alan for the whole time, Alan refused support. I did get a support from Georgia (Dementia carer support Officer) at Wandsworth Carers' Centre, and went to the Sunflower dementia cafes, and went to the dementia carers support group during this time, with Alan still telling professionals that he was quite happy with Morgan and that he didn't need support. Then the aggression started, out of nowhere Alan started being aggressive to me. His personality seemed to completely change and he was the complete opposite to how he had been before. The social worker started exploring care homes, and I was supported

by Tracie - the dementia transition worker from Wandsworth carers centre to go to visit care homes. I couldn't do without Tracie, I would have been in such a state without her help. She spoke with social workers on my behalf, she liaised with the discharge coordinators from the hospital, she took me to see care homes, she asked all the right questions to professionals. Even though we are not working together anymore she still calls from time to time to check in and make sure I am alright. Alan was in Kingston hospital in 2019, from there he was discharged into Chiswick care home and has been there ever since. I have been so happy with them; they are so caring and professional. When I came to visit Alan after the first lockdown some of the staff cried when we were reunited. During Lockdown I wasn't been able to see him hardly at all, I have only seen him 3 times in for 10 months, and in those visits, we haven't even been able to touch each other due to COVID, so no holding hands even. Due to not seeing me Alan has been forgetting who I am, the staff at the home have been fantastic and have tried different ways to keep us connected but it hasn't really worked – the staff tried to do a video call between us but Alan didn't know where to look, and was confused by it so I asked not to do it again as I found it too upsetting. Then Christmas 2020 we were able to see each other twice – we were able to kiss and hug each other for the first time for almost a year.

- **Has there been any barriers you both faced accessing support - Did services acknowledge your relationship? Were services respectful of your relationship?**

The services we have got support from, the carers centre, the hospital, the care home they have all been very respectful of our relationship. Staff do not call Alan and I friends, we are called partners. In the hospital the nurses would say when I was visiting Alan “not to worry Alan, everything is alright now, Morgan is here” We have never faced discrimination about our relationship from professionals. The staff in the care home where Alan is has always been very respectful of our relationship, they will call me to tell me if Alan has said that he loves me during the day. The staff have always been very friendly and welcoming to me. They hung a picture of me on Alan's wall so he can remember me, that always makes me smile.

- **Has there been any barriers to you being out to other carers or professionals?**

I started attending the Carer Support group run by the great group leader Georgia, she was a dementia worker and she was always so respectful of my relationship. On my first time attending the group I was quite nervous as I introduced myself and said that I was caring for

my partner Alan, then I emphasised “he” again whilst in the meeting to make sure the rest of the group understood that my partner was a man. I never had any problems with the group, they were very friendly, we’d go out for tea after the group and other carers were always very nice and ask questions about Alan. I think a lot of the carers had enough on their mind to be worried about me and Alan.