

Case Study

Michael has been attending Golden Memories with his wife and carer Jo, since August 2021. As life-long Watford FC fans, they heard about the programme and decided to come along. Jo speaks of the time before Michael's diagnosis when she knew something wasn't right: 'Michael had become extremely introverted and wouldn't go anywhere or do anything. He became really anxious and couldn't leave the house without having a panic attack. He had been such a sociable person.'



Michael Appleby (75 years old)

Diagnosed with vascular dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in August 2020.

After the shock of receiving the diagnosis, Jo and Michael found solace in Golden Memories. Jo commented: 'Football is Michael's life. We started coming to the sessions and it was wonderful to see him start to engage and respond particularly with the talks, interviews and history of Watford FC. He found it fascinating and loved to see the former players. I also noticed that he would really like looking out onto the pitch, seeing the groundsman cutting the grass. He was mesmerised.'

Geoff, our historian gave Michael programmes to look at. Geoff's passion for the club and its history really engages our guests and evokes their memories and emotions. The highs and lows, the hysteria, the anticipation and the feeling of winning.

Creating a family and a community is central to the way we deliver our Golden Memories sessions. Jo and Michael have made new firm friends. Jo explained: 'We have made lots of friends, met so many people and are now even on a Whatsapp group where we share details of dementia-friendly events and groups.'



We have seen how Michael has grown in confidence, feeling more comfortable to talk and share in the sessions. Jo remarked 'Michael was such a sociable soul and the dementia took away his sparkle. Now he doesn't stop talking. (The programme) has really brought him out of himself. I have seen such a difference in him. It's wonderful.'

For Jo as his carer, the sessions have made a huge impact as she started to connect with other carers and form friendships. 'When we are all together I don't have to worry about our loved ones. I know Michael is in a safe environment surrounded by people who care. I don't have to worry about what he might say or do. I have made friends who are in the same situation as me and we understand exactly what each other is going through.'

Although it was his interest in the football that brought them to Golden Memories, Michael participates and really enjoys all of the activities on offer including dancing and fitness sessions. Both Jo and Michael arrive with a smile on their face. They contribute to the group on many levels, giving everything a go, engaging with speakers and are always such fun.

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When asked 'What is different about your life now, compared to before you joined Golden Memories?' Jo replied: 'I could never have imagined doing all the things we are doing now. We have such a laugh and I never thought we would after Michael was diagnosed.'

It was through Golden Memories that they discovered other activities and support groups which they now attend, making them better connected to their community.

In the past few months Jo and Michael have moved to Golden Friends, a social group with other guests from Golden Memories. Alongside monthly sessions, guests receive a reminiscence newsletter every week. Jo commented: 'We really enjoy the newsletters and the quizzes included. Always so interesting and I sit with Michael reading it out to him. It's a lovely activity for us to do together.'

We have also added more variety to the sessions including trips out, Easter and Jubilee specials. Jo said: 'The variety is great. We love every aspect of it. More importantly it means the world for us all just to get together and keep the contact with the other guests at Golden Friends.'