

Meet Paul and Doreen

Paul (51) lives with his mum Doreen (late 70's). Paul is interested in horror and sci-fi films and is a talented keyboard player. When he was at school his mum was told he has a borderline / mild learning disability and is autistic but has had no formal diagnosis on his records. He has no friends in the 'real' world but he does have some friends online – some have been friends for 20 years but they have never met. He often 'falls out' with neighbours, members of the public or people online, which scares his mum and leads to Paul avoiding people. Paul is verbally articulate but struggles to talk about his feelings. He can be sensitive to sudden noises and criticism and says he 'cannot hear anything' when he gets stressed.

Doreen coordinates the household and finances and Paul does all the 'physical' activities. They live off the widow's pension that Paul's dad left, but they are struggling to make ends meet, and they are confused about whether they can claim any other benefits. Doreen's health is deteriorating and she now has mobility problems and lacks confidence getting around. She needs further health examinations but does not want to leave Paul alone overnight. Their house is described as 'cluttered' by a community occupational therapist who came to give Doreen advice on falls prevention.

Paul can become 'flustered' when he is under pressure or facing unexpected events. In the past this has led him to throw objects and kick furniture. He often acts on impulse and is ashamed afterwards. He was once cautioned by the police after slapping some teenage boys who were taunting him – now he will not travel on public transport and cannot drive, so Doreen pays for taxis

for them to do their shopping. Paul has never worked but he does buy films and action figures from the charity shops and sells them online to make 'pocket money'. He has tried volunteering several times but leaves when he feels criticised.

Paul hints at grief, loss and bereavement – this could be for his dad and/ or for the life he feels he wanted (which includes marriage, children and a job). He cannot bear to think about his mum's death. As Doreen's health is deteriorating, they are both scared that they will be separated or forced to move into a care home.

What are the key challenges that Paul and Doreen face?

Do you commission services in your area that could help them?