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SHEFFIELD CARESCAPES:  
Potential Futures for a Caring Society

# **Sheffield Carescapes: Potential Futures for a Caring Society**

Stories:

***Comprehensive and  
Assistive Robotic Enhancer /  
How Many Years?***

by Akeem Balogun

Foreword by Matthew J Lariviere

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# Foreword

Care is in crisis. Years of austerity and chronic staff shortages combined with high turnover rates for the care workforce place an increased burden on the system. With demographic shifts resulting in ageing societies globally, there will be increased reliance on support from the care system.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore of public discourse and consciousness how crucial care and support are for individuals throughout the life-course. Health and care professionals have been lauded as heroes and crucial to the livelihood of the nation.

But care is more than just formal services performed by care workers, nurses and doctors. Care derives from relationships. It is how we, as a curious and creative species, strive to support each other to live and, ultimately, die well. Through our expressions of care and caring responsibilities to other people, we make sense of who we are.

The stories in this collection are an invitation, a provocation, to hope for a better future. A more caring society.

# Stories

# **Comprehensive and Assistive Robotic Enhancer**

—Strobe Care Ltd, this is Tamilha speaking, what can I help you with?

—It's my dad. He's got himself into a mess; he doesn't think he needs anyone because of Marc and that house he's in, but he does—

—Okay, one moment. Can I have your name, please?

—Sorry. It's Sara. I'm his daughter.

—And your father's?

—Lucas. Lucas Howard.

—His date of birth?

—19th of October 2024.

—Your phone number?

—It's this one – the one I'm calling from.

—Thank you. Sorry; your father, Lucas.

—Yes.

—He's supported by the Comprehensive & Assistive Robotic Enhancer? Do you know which model?

—What?

—The C.A.R.E bot. Is it Marc 3, Marc 4...

—Oh! Yes. But I couldn't tell you which version. It's just Marc to us.

—That's fine. You were saying.

—My dad, I knew something – sorry; we – we knew something was wrong when he was being more stubborn than usual. We were seeing him once a week, me and my brothers. After we got him Marc, and moved him into the fluid home, that slowed down a bit. He didn't really need us. Well, we thought he didn't anyway. I'm not sure I'm making sense here. Let me start again... My dad's 76. He was 75 when he started losing his mobility, and earlier this year his memory went a bit too. He used to drink you see. I work full time. My brothers do too. And our mother's no longer here, so none of us really have the time to look after him. When he first began to deteriorate last year, that's when I thought about carers, and I knew he'd be against it before I'd even asked, but I asked anyway, and, somehow, I managed to convince him. For the first few weeks, he put up with them, but things broke down quickly. He didn't want them touching him, he didn't want them making his food, giving him his medication, and it got bad.

I think he attacked one of them even. Regular carers wouldn't cut it, so we did some research and came across this comprehensive thingy.

—Comprehensive & Assistive Robotic Enhancer. It's fine. Just say Marc.

—Okay. We looked into it, how it works in conjunction with fluid homes – which are the future by the way.

—They could be.

—What was your name again?

—Tamilha.

—The floors move, Tamilha, the ceilings change colour to help sleep, reminders appear on the wall. It's even difficult to fall over because the ground, it's got—

—It's sensitive to uneven pressure and reacts to it.

—That's it. The beds too; amazing, and this is without Marc. The house is like a body, and when you put Marc in there it comes to life. It's the brain almost. No need for care homes. No need for carers. Fluid homes, Marc, they're all you need. It's ease of life, not just elderly people. I wish I could live in one.

—I agree.

—We had no chance of affording the actual home. I looked at the guy showing us around like he was a mad man when he gave us the option of buying, but if we split it between the three of us we could afford to rent it. And that was that. Lucas loved it. Marc was like an electronic pet to him, and it didn't matter that his movement was beginning to get shaky. The house managed that for him. It kept up with that, made sure he could live on his own no matter his state, and that was it. We just sort of left him... and he was happy. We agreed that one of us would visit him once a week, so every three weeks we'd all get a chance to see him.

—Good. Human interaction is important in conjunction with Marc.

—It is. I know that now, but, you know, work got in the way – for all of us, and we saw him less and less. He then started being short with us when we did see him, and it became clear he didn't want to see us at all. We only had time to see him once a fortnight, and that became once a month, until we only saw him every now and then.

—Okay ... I see ... What is it you want me to help with?

—I'm sorry. I'm getting there, but you need to hear the whole story. Can you let me finish? Have you got time?

—I have.

—Thank you. This is the first opportunity I've had to really speak about it. The police just wanted information, and my brothers handle things privately, so... We had stopped seeing him for about six months, but I was still trying to call him and text him, that kind of thing, although I realised pretty soon he was resistant to any kind of contact. Then I called my—

—Did you try to see him in person at this point?

—No, I didn't

—Your brothers?

—Yes. I was trying to call our dad, but he didn't want to speak to me, and I noticed sometimes when he picked up he was slurring his words a little. He was drinking again. That scared me. Marc was taking care of everything, so he didn't need to remember a thing because Marc gave him reminders, they come up like lights underneath the wallpaper, and it's not like he can fall over when he's half pissed because the floor catches him. The damn ground rotates; it brings the furniture to where he is, and Marc follows him around, checks his temperature, collects rubbish. The house is spotless. Of course he was abusing it. It was the alcohol that damaged his memory in the first place. Do you know how infuriating that was? To spend all that money on him, to get him the house of the future, and for him to go and do that?

—It's tough, I imagine.

—I called Michael, one of my brothers, and he went round, but Dad wouldn't let him in. He said he was fine and that he didn't need anything, that Marc and the house was more than enough. And that bloody idiot believed him. Left him to it. We had a fight about it, and he said that if I was that concerned I could access Marc remotely. I didn't believe Michael for a moment that our dad was fine, so I checked. I looked at the manual we had been given, and yes I could access it.

—You can.

—I gave it a go. I live absolute miles away, but I could see him in high definition. I'm not sure if I should've signed something before doing so.

—If you were able to access Marc that then you would've been down as his next of kin. You'd have had permission.

—Still, it felt wrong. Invasive. I was watching him, and he was doing good. He was doing well, but when I'd call him while monitoring him, he'd ignore it. It was like he knew he was being watched. Maybe Marc told him someone was observing.

—It will. Automatically.

—I wish I knew that then because his behaviour was absolutely fine every time I logged in, although at times, I'd see him look up at the wall – where the cameras were maybe. I don't know, but it was too perfect. I knew something was really wrong when he started changing his pattern. I saw him playing with Marc. The box on top has like a holographic control panel, so I could see it, but I think he forgot I was watching because he stopped Marc from administering medication. When he did that, I thought, 'Okay, he's going to do it himself.' But he didn't. I couldn't believe it. I waited another day just in case, and again; he didn't. Then he fiddled with the settings for the house, and the floor stopped moving.

—He disabled it.

—Yes. He opted for his walking stick. I kept calling, and he kept ignoring me. Then the day after, he went to the door. There was an order, and it was a small crate ... a crate of beer we later figured out. He brought it in, then began to tamper with Marc. And he was there for ages. Then the camera turned off. I couldn't see him. I should've called someone to check up on him, but I felt guilty if I'm honest. He had a right to be angry. He had a choice to be independent, and I had abused that in a way. Then we got a call from the police.

—Okay. Why were the police called?

—Honestly, nothing was too serious until now, Marc, the fluid home ... They were coping with him ... They're honestly amazing, have you seen them?

—I have. And yes they are.

—Okay. The police found him – sorry, someone had spotted him, and then *they* called the police, saying that an old man was walking around the neighbourhood. Naked ... Naked and drunk. Stumbling around because he'd left his walking stick somewhere. Do you know where he was going?

— ...

—He was heading to the Co-op for more beer.

— ... I'm sorry.

—I mean, how did he even get that far. There must be at least two dozen residents there. Where the hell was the warden? Why did no one stop him? I'll tell you why, because everything's remote, so they weren't looking because they think it's a robot's job to keep tabs on people; machine's-are-taking-care-of-everyone-so-we-don't-need-to is the mentality, and it led to the most humiliating moment of my father's life.

—I'm sorry—

—Don't be. My brothers won't even speak about it. They're ashamed of him, and they're ashamed of themselves for not doing more. We all are.

—If I can interrupt.

—Please, go on.

—For him to end up in that state, Sara, Lucas must've turned off every single one of Marc's functions, so I don't think only the technology is to blame.

—It isn't, Tamilha. I am. We are. We learned that after he'd turned off the surveillance function, and the medication support, that he'd turned off Marc's entire assist function. It couldn't call for help. Then he began fiddling with the house until it was frozen. He genuinely believed he was independent. The irony; Marc had been so effortlessly supportive that it led to him thinking he didn't need it.

—Which is dangerous.

—Tell him that. My dad's arrogant. Always has been.

—Where is he now?

—At home.

—With who? Has Marc's settings been reset? Is the house active?

—He's home, and yes it's turned on. One of my brother's are with him. Although you can't remove the function that allows you to disable Marc. Supposedly its empowering. That's what the manual says.

—All that matters is that he's safe.

—He is.

—You said you want to put something in place?

—Yes, carers. He needs them. Just someone to be with him. Since our mother died, he's got used to being by himself. We left him to his own devices, and naturally – naturally for him anyway – he again started thinking that he didn't want to burden anyone. He is difficult,

and he knows this, but he's considerate too, so in a way he thought shutting everyone out was doing them a favour.

—People have to realise that despite Marc being comprehensive, and the fluid home being all supportive, that people need people.

—We know this now. I've spoken to my brothers, and we're going to make sure we take turns in seeing him like we used to – but he needs constant co-presence. He needs support, no matter how he feels about it. Not just anyone; carers who are familiar with Marc and the fluid homes. We've already made it so Marc has scheduled our visits, and hopefully this along with all the above solves everything.

—We'll look at options. And I'm going to feed that back to my manager, Sara, and they'll pass it on to the respective companies.

—Feedback what?

—What happened with Lucas. It needs to be clearer that some kind of human interaction is needed to co-ordinate with Marc.

—No one ever told me that – it's obvious, but still no one ever indicated that things could get this bad without it.

—Marc is catered to provide care physically, not emotional support, and regardless of whether you understood this or not, it should be expressed clearly. Similar outcomes have occurred numerous times now; where relatives are depending on Marc, and or the fluid homes, to provide everything – no care in place, and they themselves are forgetting to check up on them.

—We're not the only ones?

—You're not. I get this call most days.

— ... I'm not sure if that makes me feel better or worse.

—My advice is not to dwell on it. Shall we get on now and begin putting the right support in place for your father?

—Okay, let's do. I'll get his phone number and address. Let me find them.

—Tell me when you're ready.

—One moment... Okay, I'm ready.

# How Many Years?

The intention of this research was to investigate the effects of pairing people who are transitioning to retirement with young people who are leaving care and entering adulthood.

The study aimed to determine if such pairings have the potential to alleviate the growing pressure of an ageing population and an increasingly stretched workforce across all social services. If these case studies demonstrably supported both participants, then it may represent a new scalable intervention to reduce use of social services as well as foster intergenerational relationships nationally.

This document presents the collected summaries written by our first participants: June Maddison, aged 61 at the beginning of this research and who applied to take part, and Manuel Moussa, aged 16 at the beginning of this study and who was put forward by the Sheffield City Council after showing relatively positive interest in the project in comparison to other opted-for children.

These summaries are taken from the forms sent to Ms Maddison and Mr Moussa annually over the course of their pairing. To read the forms in their entirety, please send an enquiry to the Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities at the University of Sheffield.

**(CASE #001:  
JUNE MADDISON and MANUEL MOUSSA |  
COLLECTED SUMMARIES)**

The following are all taken from Section G.5 of the form, headed: *In summary, describe your pairing this year.*

## **YEAR ONE: 2055**

### ***June***

It hasn't been a year yet as I was paired with Manuel in October, and I wasn't able to see him over Christmas, but the times I have seen him, I've enjoyed. At my age, life is pretty predictable. Seeing Manuel once a week is a welcome change. He's been a pleasant, weekly interruption, and, if I'm honest, it's what I wanted when I signed up for this. Like I said in my application; after losing my husband, and my son and his family moving abroad, I have felt lonelier, and it's best to nip something like that in the bud early with a distraction like this. I've noticed a difference in how I feel already. Although Manuel is quiet, and I can't tell if I'm having any impact. You said the aim of this research was to prevent loneliness amongst those approaching old age and to provide vulnerable young adults with mature role models. I don't believe I'm doing the latter yet, but, we'll see.

### ***Manuel***

I like June. The last time I saw her I called her Summer. She didn't like it, but I'm going to keep calling her that. She's alright. I don't mind seeing her.

## **YEAR TWO: 2056**

### ***June***

Ten pages of questions and box ticking but only this tiny space to summarise 12 months? You should think about making it bigger, just a bit of feedback (seeing as there's no feedback section). Up until winter, Manuel missed every other meeting. About half of them. We took to seeing each other in the library again as it was too cold, and, eventually, he spoke! He strung sentences together! I learned his absences was due to a relationship that wasn't going well, but either way it was the first opportunity I had to be the role model that I'm supposed to be in this. I think Manuel's starting to see me as an older sibling, maybe? Which is good; that feeling of being wanted – or depended on even. It feels good to have that. The silence these days is louder, and there hasn't been much this year beyond work, so seeing Manuel has been beneficial.

### ***Manuel***

It's been a bit of a hard year for me, so her advice has been good. I've enjoyed seeing her every week the past few months, and I think she's happy to see me when we get together, so I feel bad for missing so many meetings. I'll make up for it next year. Plus, Summer's kind of cool. I think I'll try to be like her when I'm older.

## **YEAR THREE: 2057**

### ***June***

Really? You've made this box smaller? ... It's been a terrible year but the two of us have been good. Manuel's 18 now, and I'm 63, and, unbelievably, he hardly missed any meetings. I think I missed just as many as he did (unexpected bouts of illness). I'm hoping I can get permission for the two of us to see each other at my house next year onwards. The library's closed, and he's working now, so by the time we're both done most places are shut. He was trying to get an apprenticeship but the crash has made that impossible, but he says I've been a big help during the last quarter, so that's good. He tells people I'm his social worker, which I find funny (him calling me Summer, not so much). My son's had another child in Australia, and I haven't been able to visit due to the world going to crap, so without a doubt our pairing has been even more welcome. He just needs to stop growing. He takes up a lot of space.

### ***Manuel***

It's been important. This year was full of disappointment, and I think it would've been harder without her guidance. I've noticed loads of adverts this year about old people, 'Do you know anyone who's at risk of isolation?' and it makes me want to ensure that it never applies to Summer, but I haven't told her as I think it would irritate her. She's a good woman, so I hope she never feels like that. Anyway, I'm looking forward to another year.

## **YEAR FOUR: 2058**

### ***June***

Our pairing in summary (because you insist) has been smooth sailing. I've missed more weeks than he has (which is a first, but my health's been up and down again). He's seen my home! He was amazed, but I live nowhere fancy. It made him open up about his life more when before he wouldn't say much. Manuel's childhood was tough, life in care often is, but I'm glad he said it wasn't all bad. We talked about ageing a lot (which I don't like, but we're seeing stuff about it everywhere) and also about how this pairing initiative is being rolled out beyond Sheffield. Interesting... He's 6'4 now, but he's stopped growing (I think). He's working in a call centre, and he blames the crash for why he wasn't able to get into a trade. I told him blaming will get him nowhere, that it's all down to him to get the life he wants. He believes me, so I hope I'm right. He did say that everything I've wanted I've got... which is kind of true, so maybe I'm not lying. I like how some of the stuff he says makes me think and not always the other way round.

### ***Manuel***

Summer's been a bit ill this year but she's fine at the time of me writing this. I've learned a lot about her life, and I wish I asked her sooner as it's fascinating. She's seen a lot of changes, and I understand now why what's happening with the country doesn't faze her much. This year I'm just happy that pairing has meant I've had someone wise to see it through with. Otherwise it could've been even more stressful.

## **YEAR FIVE: 2059**

### ***June***

It's been a reflection of the freak weather: great. I spent much of the time with Manuel in the garden. Good times! I've been a bit busy this year, and he's got a new girlfriend, but, we still see each other. It doesn't even feel like research any more. I only remember it is when I get this form through the post. It just makes sense, pairing that is. I don't want to say it should be mandatory, but the thought of entering later years without Manuel is a bit daunting. If you're alone like I am, or at risk of being alone, then why not? It's a different dynamic, it's not like a relative, or a carer or a friend even, he's a support post – wholly that. I have nothing else to add. It's nice to have someone who wants to see you, not pity you or want to care for you, just see you because it's you. Mentally, it's fortifying.

### ***Manuel***

Excellent. We managed to meet most weeks of the year, and she helped me with my new job application a couple weeks back. I'm sure if I get it, it'll be because of her. I don't see the point in this form. What is it you guys are looking for again? I hope we can still see each other even if it turns out care is nationalised. I'm worried that might make this experiment no longer necessary for some reason, but I'm not sure it's even connected. Anyway, overall, it's been great. Bring on another year.

## **YEAR SIX: 2060**

### ***June***

Different. Manuel's becoming a man (he wears a beard well). (And it's always satisfying to see someone grow in front of you.) He still fulfils a bolstering role for me, which he seems unaware of. It's only in these forms that I'm vocal of the role he plays in my life. It's been six years now and I don't regret it. I've read that other pairings are going extremely well, but I don't think any are as strong as ours (wink).

Highlights:

- Manuel getting a promotion (Already!)
- Me teaching him how to bake both regular and vegan cake
- Manuel breaking into my house to leave me a gift for my birthday

My health is better, and I feel like my life has more fulfilment, even outside of work.

### ***Manuel***

I don't understand why we have to fill these. I do, but still, I don't. Anyway, it's been good. Summer's health has been 100%, which is great as I could tell last year she was secretly concerned that she might not get better. Maybe it was like confirmation she was getting old, not being able to recover. Luckily, that passed. The older I get the sillier I think ageing is something to be afraid of. Summer rarely complains and just finds ways around setbacks, and I'm starting to realise all you can do with your life is what Summer has done with hers, which is to do the things you enjoy.

## **YEAR SEVEN: 2061**

### ***June***

I don't imagine this will be a long entry. My son wasn't able to see me this year, and I lost two friends, so it's been difficult. Manuel has been more important to me than ever. I still can't get over how tall he is (he banged his head in my doorway even) and I keep having to tell him not to sit with his legs so wide open. He's been learning about his Turkish heritage too. I never registered that there was this whole history behind him, so that's been interesting. He now has a job in the NHS, and earlier this year he was helping with a campaign to reach elderly people at risk of isolation, which led to a lot of discussion about that. Annoyingly, he still calls me Summer, but besides that, I eagerly await another year.

### ***Manuel***

Good as always. I'm only filling this in properly because I asked Summer what she says in hers and she wouldn't tell me. I'm worried it might be emotive and insightful while mine is short and dry, so I'm going to make sure there's a bit more meat here just in case. To summarise: I can't imagine going through life without the ol' lady. Some of the things I talk to her about I don't even speak to Lamiya about. I'm moving out too, and I'm looking forward to Summer seeing my new place. We've also been reading about the pairings occurring since I got that job in the NHS. It's weird, to think that we were the first, and that because of our responses here it led to more. 2062, bring it on.

## **YEAR EIGHT: 2062**

### ***June***

Slower. Later in the year Manuel couldn't see me as much due to work, but prior to that we saw each other most weeks. There's been a couple of deaths this year, and it's made me decide to retire early. Manuel's helped me streamline ideas about what I can do after too. I think this will be a short summary as its more of the same. (The others were maybe a bit soppy when I think back. Make sure he never reads these, lol.) Highlights: Manuel cooking me manti, and me cutting him a key after he broke into my house again thinking something was up after I'd missed a meeting and not got back to him. Cost me a small fortune to get those damn locks sorted.

### ***Manuel***

A lot of my time with Summer this year has been talking about life and memories after a few people she knew died. She's a stoic woman, and I've still yet to see anything faze her. She's 68 now, not ancient, but it does make me think. I broke into her house in April because I thought something might've happened when she missed our meeting and didn't tell me. I made her manti to make up for it, which she really liked. I look back on the past eight years, and I feel like many positive changes I've had are because of this pairing. If I'm honest, just her being there has made me more confident in myself.

## **YEAR NINE: 2063**

### ***June***

It's been delightful. Not like other years haven't been, but this has been distinctively warm because ... Manuel's going to be a father! The baby is due in five months, and still he's somehow never missed a week. Not one! I spent a lot of time sharing my experiences as a parent to prepare him. I haven't had a chance to meet Lamiya yet, but I will. And I've seen his new home. It's tidy. I was pleased. I only remember this is the result of research when you send these. I wonder if new pairs have to fill these in or if it's just us test dummies ... To summarise: Manuel is family to me. Highlight: Manuel telling me he's going to be a dad, obviously.

### ***Manuel***

One word: essential. Summer's been there to keep me calm, not that I ever panicked, but her wisdom once a week has been needed. I know she's going to retire soon and that I'm going to be a father, but I've promised her that nothing's going to change. A part of me thinks she doesn't believe that I'll continue to see her next year, so the goal is to prove her wrong and continue to see her once a week. So, hoşça kal!

## **YEAR TEN: 2064**

### ***June***

With Manuel being a dad and me finalising my retirement, it's been tested. There was a period where we didn't see each other for a whole month. He kept saying he'd come, but he kept cancelling, and for a while I began to think he didn't have time for this old woman (dramatic), but we returned to our usual meetings eventually. I don't know how he was able to, but despite telling him he didn't have to I appreciated him coming. The baby is BEAUTIFUL. Lamiya as well. So much cute. It's overwhelming. What else is there to say? Highlight: being Çağlar's godmother, and being a part of a new, wonderful family.

### ***Manuel***

It's been a lot! I've managed to see her despite Çağlar. Lamiya wasn't always happy about that, but when I told her it was like checking on your grandmother she understood. I didn't like describing Summer like that, but it was necessary. I feel like Summer's getting old but isn't noticing. She speaks a bit less, although this might be due to me speaking more! I'm not sure, but I haven't let those thoughts creep up on me much as I've had my hands full, but it's there. On the outside our relationship's good, but on the inside, I've really picked up on the changes in her mannerisms, and it's nothing serious, it's just age after all, but still. Overall: we're as strong as usual. (Do you really still need these forms?)

## **YEAR ELEVEN: 2065**

### ***June***

Good. Like always. I keep saying he doesn't have to, but Manuel has kept to most visits during my first year of retirement. (My sickness has flared up again, so retiring was definitely the right thing as I doubt I would've been able to cope at work.) Otherwise, all is good. Really getting tired of this form to be honest. I know you need qualitative data, but it's getting pretty obvious now that this has been a success. I'll say it again: I'm glad I signed up for it. I imagine I'd feel a lot more 'isolated' was it not for Manuel.

### ***Manuel***

Still going strong. I ignore her protests telling me I don't have to see her as that's ridiculous after all. This is for the both of us, but I think she forgets that. It's a sign of her ageing in my eyes, that she's starting to see herself as a burden. It's hard to believe it's been this many years. Makes me a bit uneasy how fast time moves. These days I can't help worrying about her, and I spoke about her to Lamiya a lot as she crosses my mind whenever I see news about the ageing crisis, the second push to nationalise care and so on. Nonetheless, we're still okay, even though a lot of the year has been me trying to not over-think how she is. I do need Summer, and Çağlar enjoys being around her, so I hope they get more time together.

## **YEAR TWELVE: 2066**

### ***June***

Good. Manuel's been supportive, which is no surprise, but with everything he's doing he really doesn't have to. It's been a tough year with the cancer, but I've been coping. This will be a short one. In summary: I've never been as appreciative of Manuel's company as I have been this year. Strangely, I feel like I've matured. Accepting that I will end (a crude way to put it, but that is what it is) is like the last transition. I'm just thankful that in this shedding of my old self for this more new, fatalistic one, Manuel is someone I haven't let go of.

### ***Manuel***

The same, but the challenge has been her health. She declined rapidly, but I won't dwell on that seeing as she's pulled back so well. She was hospitalised for a bit too, and it made me feel powerless. I was super afraid of the thought of Summer no longer being here, but I've been doing my best not to show it, and thankfully I've been busy left right and centre, so it's kept my mind occupied. I asked for more time in my summary last year and I feel like that request was spat on, so I'm asking for nothing on this occasion. I'm just glad she's been given the all clear. I look forward to another year. That's all.

## **YEAR THIRTEEN: 2067**

### ***June***

I've been filling in this form for 13 years now. How many more years are you going to keep sending these? You'll probably still be posting them after I'm gone. All I have to say is that Manuel's presence has been important.

### ***Manuel***

Strong, because it's had to be. Summer's been taking things easy, which is good. On some occasions, I've seen her two or three times a week. I'm not sure if this is due to me doubting how much time we have together or if it's a sign of our relationship evolving. I've scrapped the whole meeting once a week thing, and I'm just seeing her whenever I can. In a way, doesn't that mean we've outgrown this research? She's only 74, so I hope she has several more years left and that her health improves.

## **YEAR FOURTEEN: 2068**

### ***June***

I have been critical of this research in these summaries at times, but I want to make it clear here that I am happy I registered. I have seen Manuel more times this year than I have any other and watching him grow up and having him appear every week at my front door has been delightful. The question: has pairing combated loneliness amongst the elderly? The answer: I would not know, as I have not felt alone or isolated since 2055 :)

### ***Manuel***

It's been a year of learning. I didn't realise how well Summer was at hiding things until now, like the pain she's in and how unconcerned she appears to be with it. She's still got her memory, which is good, but she's nowhere near as active of course, and she has a carer who visits every so often, but she isn't too dependent, and she's still at home. She's deteriorated again, much faster than last time. I can't see her getting better. I've tried not to express how much it's affecting me as that will only frustrate her, but I think she's starting to see the cracks in my armour. I haven't discussed this with Lamiya much as I don't think she's ever really appreciated the relationship I've had with Summer. But I wouldn't be the man she loves without her guidance. I'm well paid, talkative, confident with strangers and able to deal with setbacks better than most, and I think that's largely down to her. No point in me writing all this down. I'll tell her in person.

## **YEAR FIFTEEN: 2069**

### ***Manuel***

I'm not sure you're aware of Summer's passing as you've still sent this form. It could be an admin error, but nonetheless I was furious when I received this and nothing for condolence, but after leaving it on my table for some months I've decided to fill it in, for her memory, in a way. I've healed a bit now, so maybe doing this will be cathartic. When I got the call from the nurse, I was angry because it wasn't Summer telling me. I wanted to hear her voice, and I was vexed with them for scaring me. Following this, I began visiting her a couple times a week, but she didn't like me seeing her there, so I started calling instead. I rang her several times a week and I vividly remember those conversations. She told me a lot of stories, especially about her past. A lot of them sounded new, like she'd just remembered them. I miss her. I doubt that'll ever change. I'm grateful I wasn't there when she died as I'm not sure how I could've dealt with seeing the life leave her. This time, I preferred hearing it from the nurse as it meant it could sink in rather than it hitting me all at once. Our last conversation was her mostly telling me that I have to keep on living, no matter what. I think she was delirious. Three days later, she was gone. And that should be the end of it, but I'm still a delinquent at heart, so I went to her house the following weekend. The door was boarded up, but I broke in anyway. The house had a dry smell, so I opened the windows, dusted a few bits and took a seat in the settee. After a few moments I realised she wasn't there to tell me not to sit with my legs wide open, so I allowed myself to expand, and I remained there for some time, absorbing closure maybe. I could still feel her, I swear.

Thank you for your life June Maddison, and I hope at the very least that I helped you feel just a little less alone.

Sevgi, Manuel Moussa

## About the collaborators

**Akeem Balogun's** stories have appeared in various publications, and he has collaborated with the likes of Found Fiction and Festival of the Mind to create project themed stories. He resides in Sheffield, and you can find out more about him by visiting [writtengallery.com](http://writtengallery.com) or searching by his social handle **@akeemwrites**.

**Dr Matthew J Lariviere** is a UKRI Innovation Fellow at the Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities at The University of Sheffield. He is a social anthropologist and gerontologist interested in cross-cultural understandings and experiences of ageing and care, and the challenges and opportunities for technologies to support older adults and families. You can find out more about Matthew's work by following him on Twitter with his handle **@mattlariv**.

## **Discover more**

The Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities was established in 2006. Led by Prof Sue Yeandle, it is an internationally renowned centre conducting research, evaluation and consultancy of contemporary policy, practice and theoretical issues and debates on care, labour and equalities.

Festival of the Mind is a unique collaboration between academics and experts from Sheffield's cultural and creative industries – bringing world-class research to life.

For more information and an up-to-date programme, visit [sheffield.ac.uk/fotm](http://sheffield.ac.uk/fotm) or follow [@FestivalMind](https://twitter.com/FestivalMind) on Twitter.