



Barbara Dewar CEO of BlueAssist UK Ltd

" It was Jim who got me involved in BlueAssist. That's not his real name of course, I don't want to embarrass him, although I think he would have been proud to have been the cause of such an important movement. I met Jim at the Ithaka the day centre in the middle of Ostend where BlueAssist was originally developed. I was visiting to look at the technology they had developed when I was invited to accompany Jim on a trip out to the local phone shop. Jim wanted to increase the memory on his phone, being a keen photographer he was always running out. Jim had difficulty making himself understood due to a large tongue and weak mouth control, despite being bilingual. I struggled to understand the few words he said to me in English and those who knew him well said it was the same in his native Dutch. This had caused him frustration in the past. Now however he had BlueAssist.

Together with his coach (who had helped write the message before we left) we headed out into the busy Ostend shopping Centre. Jim chose the phone shop, one that did not know the Ithaka centre or Jim. The coach and I stood looking at the phone cases, as you do when waiting for a friend in a phone shop, while Jim waited his turn then approached the counter. Once there he presented his card and phone.

The young man read the message and without batting an eyelid immediately said 'No problem we can sort you out' and organised a new memory card for Jim. Job done, success.

However for me the biggest success was not that Jim had been able to do this simple task in the shop, or that the young man behind the counter had been so helpful. It was the look of joy and pride on Jim's face as he left the shop, I swear he was walking ten feet off the ground.

Now I am proud to be part of bringing BlueAssist to the UK. I hope you will benefit from BlueAssist, support it and join us in making sure that everyone who needs help to communicate in the community has a way to use the BlueAssist message."