

Ed's Story...My wife, Elaine

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April 2017 was the worst month of my life because that's when my lovely wife Elaine was diagnosed with terminal Cancer. We had been married for 44 years and were totally devoted to each other, the news came as a huge shock to both of us. After Elaine's diagnosis, I spent the following 19 months concentrating on ensuring that she had everything she needed. It was only during the last three months of her life that Elaine was unable to look after herself and it was at this point I made the decision to become Elaine's full-time carer. I knew this would be a great responsibility to do on my own, but our two married children, although lived nearby, both had young families so I wanted to protect them from any additional worries as much as possible.

We had a wonderful GP who made sure we had everything we needed to keep Elaine comfortable at home. It was our GP who first introduced us to HospiceCare North Northumberland. From HospiceCare's first visit they made a huge difference and I saw an amazing turn-around in Elaine. The two Hospice nurses who visited us at home immediately fitted in and felt like they were an extended member of our family. They took over all our worries and decisions at a time Elaine and I were both tired and emotionally drained. I had been constantly worrying that I was doing the right thing for Elaine - keeping her comfortable and all the other things she required - especially her dignity.

During HospiceCare's visits, Elaine was able to have conversations with the nurses about things she might not want to talk to me about. Their support also meant that, for the first time in months, I could have a full nights' sleep knowing Elaine was being cared for by people who cared as much as me – their support immediately became invaluable and this gave me the confidence to face the trials of the next day ahead.

HospiceCare were also available for my children and grandchildren to have discussions with and that also made a big difference. The Hospice nurses felt like family you hadn't seen for a long time coming to visit when you needed them most, someone who you could have a cup of tea with and a chat about anything and also have a good old weep, which happened quite a lot. When Elaine's condition deteriorated the Hospice nurses were there with me and continued their care and support to the end. Elaine sadly died on 24th January 2018 at 4.00 pm, I was with her and the HospiceCare nurses stayed close by for support. A nurse from the local medical centre was also present - both were professionals in every way.

How can anyone start to thank such an important organisation that has left such an impact on your life? My way of saying thank you has been to help where I could to fund raise and volunteer my time. I would highly recommend HospiceCare North Northumberland who were like my family and I would urge anyone out there who might benefit from their support to get in touch with this wonderfully caring and professional team of nurses. God Bless Them All. *Ed Sweeney. January 2020*