

Fliss' Story...My Dad, Eric.

"The care we received was on another level"



Fliss and her husband, Tim, retired to North Northumberland 2018, after moving from Suffolk having both retired from teaching. They had found the perfect home which was large enough for their family and Fliss' elderly father, Eric, who was 93, still living independently in Tynemouth and was the sole carer for his wife, Fliss' mum. Sadly six weeks after moving in with Fliss and Tim, Eric died....

"Dad had always been a fiercely independent, articulate, clever man, he was self-reliant and always determined that he should be the sole carer of Mum. When mum died last year, Dad agreed to move in with us and everything was great for the first three weeks. Dad had his own space, adjusted very quickly to his new life with us and we loved having him stay. However, after just three weeks after moving in, I noticed Dad's skin started to look very yellow. We spoke with his GP who referred him to Cramlington hospital for tests. The tests showed that Dad had advanced Liver Cancer which came as a shock to us as Dad had been so well right up to his diagnosis. After we were told the news, everything happened so quickly and it was at this time we were introduced to the services of **HospiceCare North Northumberland** - having only just moved into the area, we were not aware this wonderful service existed. Whilst Dad's diagnosis was such a scary time for us, Dad was very philosophical and not the least bit fazed about it. He was fully aware of the fact that he was dying.

A member of the Fast Track Home Care team at Cramlington then contacted **HospiceCare**. In response, **Nina, HospiceCare's Clinical Lead**, contacted us by telephone to ask if she could pop over to meet Eric and see how the Hospice could help. From that first visit, the impact from the support offered was so comforting and reassuring, that I remember feeling really upset and afraid that I wouldn't see the Hospice again. Mum had only died six months earlier and I realised that I hadn't really had time to grieve for her and the impact of my Dad dying had suddenly become overwhelming.

After Nina's first home visit, Dad received two visits every day from one of the Hospice at Home nursing team. At that time we were also receiving visits from our GP, District Nurse and Carers, who were great but they all had other things to do. The care we got from the Hospice at Home team was on another level, nothing was ever rushed, there was never a sense of time or urgency and the nurses knew what they were doing and most of all, Dad looked forward to their visits.

After Nina's first home visit, Dad received two visits every day from one of the Hospice at Home nursing team. At that time we were also receiving visits from our GP, District Nurse and Carers, who were great but they all had other things to do. The care we got from the Hospice at Home team was on another level, nothing was ever rushed, there was never a sense of time or urgency and the nurses knew what they were doing and most of all, Dad looked forward to their visits.

Being an academic, Dad's mind was still as sharp as ever and he used to really enjoy chatting with the nurses about anything and everything. Sometimes they would arrive to hear Dad's music blaring out of the speakers in his room, which made everyone smile. Sometimes they would give Dad a relaxing hand massage or encourage the family cat to jump up on the bed to be with him. Nothing was too much trouble for the Hospice nurses who instinctively knew what to do and when. Dad felt so looked after and cared for because the Hospice nurses adapted to him and his needs. When Dad's health deteriorated he started receiving overnight care from the Hospice, this enabled Tim and I to get some sleep knowing that Dad was being well looked after and that we would be alerted if there was any change in his condition.

On the Thursday 11th December Dad slipped into a deep sleep, dying 4 days later on Sunday 14th December 2018. His death was calm and peaceful and he was surrounded by his family. We can't thank HospiceCare enough, they were amazing and we were totally blown away by the compassionate care of their nursing team. The care the Hospice delivered enabled my Dad to be himself, right up until the day he died."

Fliss Elsom-Cook

