



June 2010

Dear supporter

I am 28 and a patient at the Hospice.

I offered to write to you to ask if you could help Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice care for more patients in their own homes who live in your town. Just like their Hospice Care at Home team have done for me, and changed my life so much.

At 25 I was diagnosed with two brain tumours. I just kept thinking - I'm too young with too much still to come and it just isn't fair! One tumour was cancerous and, despite operating, it returned – this time in a much more aggressive form.

The doctors told me I was going to die.

I have never felt loneliness like it. I felt completely out of control – no-one could do anything and I was totally hopeless.

I had to leave university and move back to my mum's house in Farnham, and immediately start an intensive six week course of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. I changed so much, physically and emotionally. I didn't know how I could go on like it. It was getting so hard to move. I was just exhausted and swollen and feeling defeated. I had such beautiful, long dark hair, and it was all falling out. I looked in the mirror and it wasn't me any more. I felt like I'd lost my identity.

The doctors referred me to Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice in February 2009 and I thought it was the end. The first time I met them, I sobbed the whole way round my tour of the Hospice.

But then I realised that a hospice is a place full of people who can help me and my mum feel like we can cope again. I couldn't believe I'd lived down the road from them and never known.

What happened next felt like it saved my life. After the devastation of hearing the word 'hospice' had sunk in and I'd made my first visit, I realised that all these people wanted to help me live, not die!

This wasn't the end, but the start of a new chapter in my life and my illness.

During my initial assessment stay at the Hospice, the nurses, therapists and Patient and Family Services team helped me to become mentally and physically strong enough to return home and start a six month course of chemotherapy in the May. I felt like I was back in control.

Since then they have been caring for me at my house. Being at home makes such a difference. I have been visited at home by my nurses, doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and complementary therapists. They have even helped us make financial applications for support. This makes everything feel more manageable and means I can concentrate on my health, and not worry about how we were going to get by.

Mum and I know we can turn to the Hospice for the practical, technical and emotional support we need as well as my medical needs. They are always willing to help us as much as they can.

I am determined to stay positive. After experiencing such wonderful teenage years, I have no regrets. Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice has helped me to remain independent and continue to enjoy my life in a way I didn't think possible. They have changed my world from one that revolved around sadness and death, to one full of happiness and life. I have so many ambitions for the future, and one of them is to help the Hospice spread the word by sharing my experience.

I was lucky enough to be part of their Hospice Care at Home trial last year. I wish they could offer Hospice Care at Home all the time to everyone who needs it in our area. It would change the lives of anyone going through what I'm experiencing. Although Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice cares for over 100 patients a day, there are probably twice that number who need their care - if only they could be looked after in their own homes, like I am.

And that is why I am writing to you now. Some loyal supporters have left Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice a gift in their wills, which has enabled them to build a new part of the Hospice. This will provide the base to extend the Hospice Care at Home service to more people needing their expertise at home. We now need to raise the funds for the bigger team of community nurses, physiotherapists, occupational and complementary therapists to care for this greater number of patients. Just like the ones who visit me and my mum at our home.

You probably know that Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice only has a sixth of its costs funded by the NHS. The balance has to be found by asking friends in the area to support the care that they give. Could you help by giving a regular donation? A standing order means a lot to the Hospice as it allows them to plan ahead with more certainty. They tell me that:

£3 a month would help pay for a session with a complementary therapist
£5 a month would help pay for an appointment with a Clinical Nurse Specialist
who visits patients and families at home
£10 a month would help pay for a whole day of occupational therapy

Last year, the Hospice made a promise to aim to help more people like me and my mum, by offering hospice care at home to more patients in more homes. Please think about how you could help this promise come true. Whatever you can give, you will be making the biggest difference you could ever imagine to people like me and patients living in your town.

I want to still be here to watch the Olympics in 2012. I know I couldn't hope to do that without everyone at the Hospice. And my biggest wish is for everyone who needs them to be able to get their help too.

Thank you for reading my story. Whatever you choose to do now, once you put this letter down, please remember how important you are to the Hospice, and to me.

Yours sincerely

Lianne

P.S. If you would like to know more about the Hospice Care at Home appeal just visit their website at www.pth.org.uk/HCAH or call the Fundraising Team on 01252 729446. Thank you.