

Light up a Life



My daughter Charlotte

“We were cocooned in care and love – Oakhaven is a magical place.”

It'll be seven years in November since my beautiful, vivacious daughter Charlotte went into the hospice. She was just 43 years old. Charlotte was first diagnosed with breast cancer two years before, and naturally, she accepted every treatment offered to her. Finally, after multiple rounds of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, we thought she'd beaten it. At Christmas in 2013, we were told it was back – and it was spreading. Sadly, it was terminal.

We already knew of Oakhaven because they helped take care of Charlotte's husband during his battle with bowel cancer. Unfortunately, David passed away in 2002, leaving behind Charlotte and their two young children. So, when Charlotte was offered a different type of chemotherapy and told she could have the treatment at the hospice, she didn't hesitate. But by the summer, we knew it wasn't working. Her only option was to let nature take its course.

It wasn't long before Charlotte deteriorated and she was offered a bed at the hospice. From the moment Charlotte was settled into her room, we felt wrapped in care and cushioned from the outside world. The staff even arranged for me to have a bed in her room so that I could be with her all the time. They were phenomenal. Whether during the day or middle of the night when I struggled to sleep, there was always someone there to talk to. Even the housekeepers gave me a hug when I needed one!

Without exception, everyone was incredible, and when they allowed Charlotte's beloved Shetland pony, Bumble, to visit her the day before she died, it was the most beautiful moment. Bumble spotted Charlotte straightaway and trotted over to her bed. Tom, Charlotte's son, placed her hand on Bumble's nose, and Charlotte smiled. We know that's the last thing she really registered. The nurses were there with us too, and one of the doctors took a photo. It's a memory I treasure.



Charlotte's Shetland pony Bumble in the hospice

I cannot emphasise enough how amazing their care is. Both Charlotte and I were shown so much kindness and given endless support. It's why for my 70th birthday I raised money by jumping out of a plane and I'm planning to abseil down Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth for my 75th next year. Oakhaven is a magical place and it has to continue for all the care the team gives to people in our community. There are lots of ways to support the hospice, and many people will be taking part in Light up a Life in December. It's a wonderful occasion and a special way to remember loved ones. I know I'll be thinking about Charlotte and David.

Sally

Please turn over for full details about Light up a Life 2021

