

Helena's Story

Name of service: Adult Therapies

Main purpose of service: A multidisciplinary team which provides treatment, rehabilitation, advice and support to people living in Kirklees. The purpose of the team is to help people achieve goals in relation to daily living and quality of life. The service includes; physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and dietetics.

About the person: Helena is a retired nurse and has recently celebrated 53 years of marriage to her husband Barrie. One evening in October 2021 she had a severe headache and collapsed. Urgently admitted to hospital – first in Halifax, then Huddersfield, and finally Leeds - Helena was diagnosed with a bleed in her brain. Further complications followed, including pneumonia and a pleural infusion and Helena needed a feeding tube fitted. Once medically stable, she was moved to Kendray Hospital, Barnsley for rehabilitation, eventually returning home in April 2022, when she was referred to Locala's Adult Therapies Service.



Home: Helena's memories of being in hospital are patchy. She remembers coming home but being confused about where she was. **"It took me a while to realise it was my house. I had a hospital bed in the dining room. I thought I must be living somewhere with the carers. I remember not wanting them to put lip balm on me, as I thought they had used it on other patients!"** Helena needed hoisting and was having 4 visits a day from carers. She hasn't had a simple recovery, with further trips to hospital for procedures, such as a lumbar puncture, to drain pressure from her brain.

Progress: Barrie explains how Helena's mobility has progressed. **"Each piece of equipment was necessary at the time. First it was a hydraulic standing frame, then it was a standing turner, then a 4 wheeled walker."** He admits he put Sarah, the physiotherapist, on the spot. **"I asked if Helena would ever walk again. Sarah said that she couldn't make any promises, but there was an outside chance."** He continues, **"Sarah was amazing. I told her, 'I bet you are good at chess'. She was always thinking 2 steps ahead! She was so enthusiastic. Sometimes she was almost dancing a jig!"** Helena can now walk indoors without support and says, **"Two weeks ago, I walked with a stick across town with Barrie."** She no longer needs carers. The only equipment Helena uses now is a frame around the toilet and a bath aide to help her in and out. Steps added at the back door and a stair rail have all been a huge help. Being able to get rid of the hospital bed and sleep in her own bed upstairs was a major turning point for Helena. Barrie says, **"People have been so good. If we wanted anything, with 48 hours we would have it. Everyone wanted the best for us."**

Eating: Barrie recalls, when Helen the dietitian got in touch, soon after Helena arrived home. **"She was the first to contact us actually. We were so glad she did! Helen changed Helena's food supplements – her food through the tube - and these were so much better, as the initial ones were upsetting Helena's stomach."** With advice and guidance from both dietetics and speech and language therapy, Helena was gradually able to safely swallow different food and drink. Barrie explains, **"They taught us about different levels of texture and thickness.....the tube is redundant now. We're just flushing it through. Hopefully it can come out soon, we're seeing the Consultant in January."** Helena says it's lovely to be eating normally again. **"I love my meals. It's stew and dumplings for dinner tonight!"**

Thinking more clearly: Although Helena doesn't remember much about her early recovery and initially struggled to speak and understand much of what was happening, she feels much improved. Working with the speech and language therapists helped. She says how she is now. **"Occasionally, a particular word won't come."**

Helena and Barrie would like to thank everyone for their expertise and support. **"Every single person from Locala who has come into this house, has gone above and beyond. We couldn't have asked for more!"** Thank you to Helen and Suzanne, Dietetic team; Sarah and Jo, Physiotherapists; Jan, Occupational Therapist; JamieLee and Grace, Speech and Language team; and Emma and Tracey, Rehabilitation Assistants.

Helena and Barrie spoke with Joanne Vaughan from Locala's Engagement Team on 7 December 2022. They give full consent to share Helena's story.