

Shirley's story



Service name: Stoma Nursing

Main purpose of service: The service offers advice, support and guidance to people living in South Kirklees who are living with a stoma. Patients are seen in their own homes and are often recovering from recent surgery.

About the person: Shirley is approaching 90 years old and was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2020. She had emergency bowel surgery in October followed by further surgery 2 days later when an ileostomy was formed. Shirley was discharged from hospital to live temporarily in a care home. She is looking forward to returning home soon. For many years, Shirley enjoyed walking with her husband and family. Another favourite past time has been doing jigsaws.

At the beginning: Shirley describes her bowel cancer diagnosis and surgery as a **“terrible shock”** and that when she first met the Stoma Nurse she was at a **“very, very low ebb. It was all so horrible.”** Shirley remembers asking herself, **“Why didn't they just let me go? I wished I had died. But the point is, life is precious.”** Shirley explains that she couldn't even look at her ileostomy, **“I could not get used to 'this thing'. I couldn't bring myself to empty it...I was adamant that I could not go home.”** The team at the care home would empty Shirley's ileostomy, with one carer asking her not to be embarrassed. **“He said, 'you see it as your life, we see it as our job'.”**

Confidence: Shirley says being visited by the Stoma Nurse changed everything. **“She is absolutely wonderful. She has given me confidence. She is so patient. From the day that she showed me a different way to empty it, I've been doing it myself. From that day to this, I've emptied it myself. I don't have to send for the carers. The carers still change it, but I can empty it when I feel it's necessary.”** Shirley continues, **“She has been so lovely and nice. When I said I must be 'thick', she said, 'stop it, you're not thick, it's just all new to you!'. I can't thank her enough. She is perfect.”**

Achievement: Shirley is now positive about the future. **“I can't praise the Stoma Nurse enough. She's given me the confidence to go home. I have achieved something.”** Shirley feels reassured that the carers who will come to her house will help change her ileostomy when required but knows she will be able to continue emptying it independently. **“At first I couldn't face going home. Now I'm looking forward to it.”**

Shirley gives full consent for sharing her patient story and spoke with Joanne Vaughan, Engagement Co-ordinator on January 6th 2021.