



Hospital at Home: a patient and carer perspective

Home comforts prove the perfect tonic

For Elaine Griffiths the age old saying 'There's no place like home' couldn't have been more apt after becoming involved with the Hospital at Home service when her husband became unwell.

At the end of last year Christopher Griffiths was facing a second stint in hospital in the space of a month with breathing difficulties and a cough. This followed a six day stay in hospital just a few weeks before and subsequent trips back every second day since then for blood tests.

The family was concerned that another stay in hospital so soon would be difficult for him and at that point the Hospital at Home service in NHS Forth Valley was suggested by his GP.

Whilst he hadn't previously heard of Hospital at Home, it was Christopher's preference to be treated in the comfort of his own me, where his wife was able to support him and provide general care. For Christopher, being able to stay in his own home was really important.

Elaine said: "It was a relief to have him treated at home because he was happier in his own surroundings and it gave us time and opportunity to speak with the staff who were managing his care.

"The process for admission was clearly explained by our GP who told us Christopher would be assessed and then we would be contacted at home in 2-3 hours.

"Neither of us had any concerns about Christopher being treated at home and felt it was definitely the best place for him to be."

A senior nurse arrived with assessment forms and a mobile oxygen unit followed by a mobile nebulizer later in the evening.

Elaine said: "Nothing was rushed by the team and they took time to demonstrate how to work the oxygen equipment and nebulizer until I felt completely comfortable with what I was doing.

"They provided reassurance that I could handle the equipment they supplied and administer the medication and were able to explain everything clearly to me, a non-medical professional."

Christopher received fast access to a CT scan a day later which changed his diagnosis and medications and his condition rapidly improved following this. Elaine was given advice on administering the new medication and a clear plan for 24 hour support.

She said: "I felt we were working as a team. The staff spoke to us directly and the communication was excellent, particularly as Christopher has a partial hearing loss.

"He was relaxed and secure at home and felt comfortable in his own bed. He was able to have the food he likes and in amounts he could cope with at times that suited him."

Throughout Christopher's time in the service, he was supported by his wife, who took on the role of an unpaid carer. Elaine described the relief of having her husband treated at home, giving the family time and opportunities to speak with the staff who were managing his care.

Importantly, Elaine felt involved in her husband's care. The communication was clear, with the team speaking to the couple, not only about Christopher's acute medical condition, but also about Elaine's role supporting her husband.

She felt that her husband was relaxed and secure at home and able to recuperate best in his own bed. He was able to have the food he liked and in amounts he could cope with. She felt that the H@H team valued the elderly.

For Christopher, one of the most important factors was the thorough nature of the examinations and the speed of the diagnosis.

Elaine believes their experience with Hospital at Home is a great example of how care in the community should be delivered and the couple have since written to their local MPs and GP to praise the support they received.

She said: "We both feel it is important to highlight good service. I wouldn't change anything about the care Christopher received under Hospital at Home."