



A night of care - by Becca

9-10pm No night is ever the same. During my last two shifts, I worked for the night sit service, and today I am working in the night response team with Camilla. I start at 9pm in the ward office. The day team brief us and tell us the details of any patients we may visit tonight.

The beginning of the shift can be quiet, so we use this time to make sure we have all the equipment and supplies that we're likely to need ready in the car. Sometimes we travel over 100 miles in just one night, and that's why preparation is so important. If we had to keep coming back to the Hospice for supplies, it would limit the number of people we're able to help during our shift.

10pm Our first call of the night came from a family in Banstead, where a young dad was a palliative patient supported by the Hospice at Home Team. He needed pain relief and personal care. As I drove, Camilla called the Lone Workers' system – a number we call before and after a visit, to ensure we safely arrive at our destinations.

When we arrived, the children were awake, and his wife was struggling to cope. We changed his dressing, gave him some medication and did our best to restore calm. I talked to his wife and did my best to reassure her. I then got in touch with the Clinical Nurse Specialist about extra support for his wife. I suggested the patient might need night sits when we offer one to one care for patients throughout the night.

12am Our second call was from a patient living on his own in Epsom. He called to say he was in terrible pain but couldn't get out of bed to fetch his medicine. Unfortunately, his carer had forgotten to leave it in the usual place – on the bedside table. When we arrived, we had to use a key hidden in the back garden. Luckily, we had a torch to hand otherwise finding it would have been very challenging.

When we went into his bedroom, the patient was so relieved to see us, because he was in extreme pain. We sat with him for a while to calm his nerves as his medication began to work. By the time we left, he was clearly more comfortable and ready to get some sleep. Sometimes it's the simple things that make a world of difference. After we'd left, Camilla called patients who'd left messages for us while I drove to the next patient.



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1.15am We were called out to a family in Kingston. It took us some time to find the house, as the street was very dark, but again we had our torch to hand! The patient's son opened the door and looked really reassured to see us but also very exhausted. His mother was very distressed and agitated. I immediately went over to care for her.

It was soon clear that our care needed to be extended to the son, who seemed in need of a shoulder to cry on. So, as I supported his mother, Camilla listened as he opened up to her. By the time we left, the family seemed at ease, and the patient's son kept thanking us as he walked us to the door.

2.50am Camilla, and I had a quick 20-minute sandwich break as we waited for the next call.

3.10am We took a call from a patient's wife in Dorking. She was extremely distressed as her husband had just died, and she was home alone with him. She didn't know who else to call. Verifying deaths is another part of our job, as we are often able to get to the patient faster than an out-of-hours GP.

3.30am We arrived in Dorking. The patient's wife was so distraught; I comforted her whilst Camilla made her a cup of tea. We dressed her husband in his clothes, which made his wife feel better.

I think having us there during such an incredibly difficult time, was so important. You could see she was still in a state of shock and didn't want to be alone. We made sure we contacted her son and stayed until he arrived.

6.00am Our final call of the night was from a family in Bookham. The call was for a patient with a blocked catheter. We change a lot of catheters during our night shifts.

It makes a huge difference as patients are often in a lot of pain, and if we weren't around, it would mean a trip to A&E. We changed the catheter and left the patient feeling comfortable.

7.30am Our shift is nearly finished, so we email the relevant information to the Day District Nurse teams.

8am As I drove home, I thought about who we had helped and what a huge difference Camilla and I made to the patients and their families' during the night.



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Princess Alice Hospice, West End Lane, Esher, Surrey KT10 8NA 01372 461808

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