

A shed load of support

Your support helped give Andy, Louise and their family precious extra time together. And when Louise died, The Shed provided Andy and his sons friendship, understanding and a safe place to talk. This is their story.

While receiving treatment for leukaemia at Kingston Hospital in 2012, Andy met a kind nurse in A&E called Hayley. Three years later, Andy's wife Louise was admitted to Princess Alice Hospice and was glad to see Hayley, who was, by then, working on the In-Patient Unit at the Hospice. Sadly, Louise had been diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer and the district nurse did not expect her to return home from the Hospice. But, after two weeks of care and pain management, Andy recalls how *'Louise left her room, walked to the car, we drove home and she walked into the living room.'*

"Princess Alice Hospice gave us an extra 15 months."

Once back home, Andy started to take Louise to the Princess Alice Day Hospice (latterly the Wellbeing



Andy's story

Centre) each week: *'Louise loved to talk, I'd use the time to wash her bedding, do a food shop and then go and collect her. She really loved the nurses – Sharon, Branca, Mary and Kim.'* Louise felt safe in the Hospice and when she became self-conscious of how steroids had altered her appearance, she always felt comfortable coming to the Hospice café; she found that nobody stared at her and she could chat comfortably to the nurses she knew. Today, Andy and his sons, the 'Wilson team', continue to look at it as being a safe space, as did Louise.

In February 2016, Louise received the devastating news that there

were no more treatment options available and was advised to make the most of the remaining time she had left. She had told Andy that she would prefer to die at Princess Alice Hospice, because she knew her family would be looked after, too. Louise was taken by ambulance to Princess Alice Hospice on Saturday 18 June and died peacefully at 7.56am on Monday 20 June 2016. Andy and the couple's three sons, then aged 25, 23 and 20, were with her.

At 2pm that same day, The Shed was opened officially in the Hospice gardens. Nurse Cathy from the Day Hospice had invited Andy and his sons to attend a few weeks earlier, and four weeks later they arrived for their first session as 'Shedders'. Andy says:

“Cathy knew we needed it. Talking about feelings was something we’d never do.”



Andy and his son Chris

Andy and his sons continued attending weekly sessions at The Shed and gradually found themselves starting to talk about things.

After deciding not to return to his previous job, Andy chose to retire early. Session leaders Miles and Ken then offered to train him as a Shed session leader, and he took on the role in 2017.

As a session leader, Andy began attending events, fetes and fairs, talking to the local community. He is proud of the meaningful connections he's made over the years and says he is *'happy to share my experiences to help others understand what Hospice care is.'*

The Shed runs Tuesday to Friday and is open to patients, carers and anyone who has recently been bereaved, with or without a prior connection to the Hospice.

To find out more, please email shed@pah.org.uk