

Marina and Barry's Story

When Barry's wife Marina became ill, he turned to Farleigh Hospice for help. He explains how the charity's different teams worked together to provide the right care and support to meet their changing needs, so he was able to continue looking after her at home.



"I met Marina at a New Year's Eve party at the end of 1984. She was dynamic, sociable and very active, cramming a lot into life. We got married and had two daughters and she was a proud nanna to our grandsons.

We lived in the same house in Chelmsford for over 30 years. I had retired from a job in contact centre design and Marina had worked as the Head Midday Assistant at the Cathedral School. She was involved in everything from the Parent Teacher Association and charity fundraising to organising a school reunion for her old classmates.

I first noticed that something was wrong in January 2021. Marina, who was 62, appeared grumpy - which was out of character - and she began to have trouble speaking and sending texts. Our GP checked her blood and hormones which were fine so we were referred to

Broomfield Hospital for more tests. On 10th February, we were told that Marina had a Glioblastoma cancerous tumour in the part of her brain that managed speech processing and the prognosis wasn't good. She was given a three-week programme of chemotherapy and radiotherapy at Southend Hospital to try to slow the spread of the tumour.

Her speech got worse, which was very frustrating for her. The tumour began to affect the right side of



her body too, so I was concerned to leave her on her own in case she fell and hurt herself. It was clear that we needed help.

I already knew a bit about the support that Farleigh Hospice provides. I wanted Marina to live as much of the rest of her life as she could, so I decided to give them a call. I spoke to Sally, Farleigh's Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist, who came to our house to assess Marina on 9th June. She arranged to meet us every week at the gym at the charity's hospice building in Chelmsford for physiotherapy to help Marina keep moving and be more comfortable. She also used acupuncture and reflexology to reduce the swelling in her feet and we had exercises to do at home to help with muscle wastage.

We were given practical advice too. One of the medicines Marina had to take - which reduced the pressure on her brain to stop her fitting - affected her skin, making it easily damaged and sore. Farleigh had an adjustable bed so Sally set it at the height of our bed at home and showed me the best way to help Marina in and out of it, without making it worse, so I felt more confident.

The great aspect about Farleigh is that it offers a wide range of support in a co-ordinated way. Sally arranged for a Speech Therapist to help Marina communicate. She also spoke to the Occupational Therapist who organised the specialist equipment



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we needed as Marina's health declined including a riser chair and a seat in the bath. The Family Support Team helped me to apply for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and a blue badge so I could use disabled parking bays, making it much easier for us to continue shopping and enjoying days out together. It was a relief to get this much help so quickly and easily.

Everyone we spoke to at Farleigh was very supportive and understood what was going on, so we didn't have to explain ourselves each time. We felt that they knew us as individuals which was reassuring without a doubt.

They helped Marina to keep going for as long as she could: I was able to take her out to a friend's 60th birthday using a wheelchair, which would not have been possible without that help and advice.

As Marina's health declined, I was also supporting her mum and our daughters. Farleigh's Family Support Team proactively phoned me every few weeks to check that I was okay and offer me further help if I needed it.

Farleigh's care was very flexible and adapted to meet our changing needs. When we couldn't get to the gym any more, Sally came to visit

us at home. When Marina couldn't climb our stairs, Farleigh quickly organised a bed so she could sleep downstairs. The Hospice at Home team visited regularly to help Marina wash.

On Christmas Eve, Marina wasn't able to stand and her fragile skin was bleeding when I touched her. The District Nurses came to see her and told me not to try to get her out of bed again. Farleigh's carers visited us twice that day and also in the morning on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Marina and I enjoyed some prosecco together with the family to celebrate Christmas. She died at home on New Year's Day - exactly 37 years since we first met.

Farleigh's carers came to our home and washed and dressed Marina so she looked like she was sleeping peacefully before she was taken by the undertakers. We held her funeral at Chelmsford Cathedral and over 300 people came - including Sally from Farleigh - which showed just how popular Marina was. We asked for donations to Farleigh in her memory instead of flowers.

Her old classmates - who she had brought together for their school reunion - held a Starlight Party at Benton Hall, raising £1,500 for Farleigh.

It would have been a lot harder to care for Marina throughout her illness without Farleigh Hospice's support and advice - they were absolutely brilliant. I knew that when I phoned, help would be there when she needed it, so I didn't have to go out and find it myself. This care and support gave me the confidence to continue looking after Marina and make the best life for her as her health got worse. Farleigh will always be in my heart because of everything they did for us."

Farleigh is here to help you

"I would advise anyone in a similar situation not to try to manage things on your own. People often think of hospice care as a one way trip to end of life but Farleigh Hospice offers so much more than that. It's not just a job for the people who work there - you can tell them everything and they have a genuine interest and really care. Call Farleigh early, have that conversation and take the help that's on offer - 01245 457300."

You can help Farleigh Hospice to care for more people like Marina by fundraising for us.

For more information visit [farleighhospice.org/events](https://www.farleighhospice.org/events) or call 01245 457411.

