

Laura and Terry's Story

When Laura was diagnosed with motor neurone disease on the same day that her and her husband, Terry, were told they would be homeless, the couple were left feeling frightened and helpless. She explains how Farleigh Hospice has been by their side ever since, helping them to make every day count.



"I have been married to the wonderful Terry since 20 December 2009 and I have two fabulous stepchildren, Ellie and Alex. I used to work as a children's nanny, which I really loved.

In October 2022 when I was 41 years old, I was diagnosed with motor neurone disease (MND) which is a life-limiting condition that affects the brain and nerves. It is caused by a problem with the body's motor neurone cells that gradually stop working, causing weakness that gets worse over time.

This was life-changing news. It was made worse when our landlord contacted us on the same day, without any warning, to give us

notice to leave. Terry explained that I was seriously ill but they wouldn't change their mind, making us homeless.

When I was diagnosed, the professor at the London hospital put us in touch with Farleigh Hospice to help me manage my symptoms.

I wasn't really aware of what Farleigh did, apart from providing end of life care. The first person we spoke to at length was Irene, Farleigh's Family Support Practitioner. She told us about the wide range of practical help that they also offer. Terry and I were very worried and emotional but she put our minds completely at rest. We had never applied for

council housing or anything like that so she explained how we would be helped and guided. We knew we weren't alone.

We needed to urgently find a home that would be fully accessible for me in the future and would also allow us to keep our two cats. Farleigh introduced us to the Peabody Housing Association which changed everything for us. Peabody really did hold our hands through our housing crisis. They called us very quickly and set the wheels in motion with the council at the same time as helping us to complete our Universal Credit claim. Within a few weeks we were on the council register and able to bid on properties straightaway. There were a few blips along the way which Peabody sorted instantly, taking all the worries off our shoulders.

We found our home on the register and bid for it and got it first time! It's an accessible flat with our own garden in a lovely spot in Great Baddow and we had no problems taking both cats with us. Farleigh's MND Coordinator helped us to apply for funding for the furniture and appliances that we needed so we could move in. We are very happy there.

I had to give up my job as a nanny. Terry and I were very anxious about having to apply



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for benefits, so we were grateful when Irene at Farleigh did our Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application for us. MND is now affecting my mobility and I have to walk with a stick so, when she also successfully applied for a blue parking badge, we were over the moon! Parking closer to our destination in wider spaces has made life much easier.

I have been having physiotherapy at Farleigh to help with my mobility problems and complementary therapies including acupuncture to help me to relax. When I had reiki when Terry was in the room, it made him so relaxed that he nearly fell asleep! MND is now also affecting my speech, making it harder for me to communicate. It is reassuring that I can contact Farleigh's nurses for expert advice and care as my symptoms develop.

Terry and I go to Farleigh's monthly MND Peer Support Group. It has been so beneficial to meet people in a similar position to us. They are often there with their partners, so it covers what we are both going through. For me, talking to people on the same journey and knowing that I'm not alone is lovely.

Farleigh Hospice has already done so much to make every day better for me, Terry and our family and we really cannot thank them enough... then they gave us the most special day.



MND Peer Support Group



Terry, Susanna and Laura

Terry and I had always talked about renewing our wedding vows, maybe for our 20th anniversary. We were about to celebrate our 14th anniversary and realised time isn't on our side anymore, so we decided to do it sooner rather than later.

Susanna, Farleigh's Chaplain and Spiritual Care Lead, had come to see us. On a spur of the moment, I told her that we wanted to renew our vows but didn't know where to start. She offered to officiate it for us if we wanted, which Terry and I both jumped at as she knows us well and is a trusted confidante. Then she said we could hold the ceremony in the sanctuary room at Farleigh's hospice building and we both said that would be absolutely perfect.

The service on 28 October 2023 was amazing, everything went wonderfully and we had the best time. It was about celebrating Terry and I still choosing each other. We walked down the aisle together to take our vows in front of thirty of our close family and friends. Then the sun shone as we had our photos taken in the hospice gardens. It's a day we will hold close to our hearts forever.

Without Farleigh Hospice, we genuinely don't know where we'd be but we doubt we'd be here in our wonderful home with our two cats and still living our best life. It's not the one we envisaged but still, for us, it's absolutely perfect.

In one day, we had gone from both being self-employed and living a fairly stress-free life to being homeless, sick and without a clue of what to do first. Farleigh has been a guiding light leading the way. They have taken away our stress, anxiety and worry and replaced it with care, love, help and guidance.

Farleigh Hospice has totally made every day count so Terry and I can live life to the full and keep being 'us'. We will both forever be so grateful."

You can help Farleigh Hospice to care for more people like Laura and Terry by fundraising for us.

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