

# A view from a family

For some reason I've been thinking recently about what I'd say if I ever had the opportunity to talk to a room full of Christie's carers. The first, and most important, thing is easy; I'd say 'thank you'. Thank you so much for all you do for the person I love. Thank you for all the meals you've cooked and cleared away, all the cups of tea you've made, and all the broken nights you've had. Thank you for dealing with unexpected crises, for helping with doctor's and dentist's appointments, for going out, for staying in, for watching someone else's choice of TV programmes. Thank you for doing – and remembering – the small things that make a big difference. Thank you for all the personal care you undertake with patience and compassion, day after day. Thank you for staying cheerful and positive when my family member is frustrated, tired, unwell or cross. Thank you for sometimes sacrificing being with your own family in order to care for my loved one.

The second thing gets a bit more complicated, but it boils down to this; I would like you to know how guilty I feel that I'm not doing all this myself. And that means that I really, really want the care package to go well. My top priority is that my loved one should be well-looked after, safe and happy, and that desire is given added weight by my own mixed feelings.

The decision to start paying for live-in care for a family member is often the result of some sort of emergency. But behind that event there is usually a sequence of other incidents which show that the person concerned is struggling. They often try to hide it. It's hard to watch as those we love lose confidence, change their personalities or struggle with illness and frailty. Sometimes, as family members, we are complicit in not wanting to face up to what's going on. Our own busy lives, work, physical distance and other family responsibilities can also blind us to the new reality. And the history of our personal relationship with the family member now needing care can also complicate matters. Yes, we love them to bits, but we may also find them difficult. Perhaps we were never particularly close to them, or we drifted apart years ago. And other family members may have different ideas as to how our loved one should be cared for.

So behind the decision to try live-in care there can be a whole host of family issues, some of which are obvious but many of which may be hidden. One thing is abundantly clear, however. Whenever you, as carers, take on a new client, you are in some ways dealing with an entire family history. Thank you – we are all so grateful. And we hope that everything will go well.