

Appendix 1.

Patient Story – Chief Officer update:

Good morning. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to be here today to share my story, as it's really important to me, as are the people it is about. As healthcare professionals, we don't expect or seek thanks – we simply do our jobs. However, I feel it's important to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the incredible staff at NHS Ayrshire and Arran for the compassionate, family-centered care they provided to my mum.

When you're told that a loved one is entering end-of-life care, you can't fully prepare for the emotional journey that follows. Memories flood back, and you're left grappling with the overwhelming question of how to face each day without them. And then there are all the "firsts" you must endure in the year after their passing. This will be my first Christmas without my mum. She passed away on February 17th this year, at the age of just 77.

“THE LOSS OF A MOTHER Is an inevitable part of our life.

We know it will come around

And we know the day will hurt

But we are not prepared

Never prepared

For the tearing

The tearing of a part of our soul

From its very seams

Stitches pulled asunder

Heart wrenched In half

Soul split in two”

My Mum was an inpatient from August 2023 until she passed away in February this year, and the impact the staff had on our family during those final months of her life was truly extraordinary. I wanted to take the time to highlight the exceptional care they provided, which reflects NHS Ayrshire and Arran's values of Safe, Caring, and Respectful.

My mum was so much more than a mum —she was my guide in life. She taught me how to knit, sew, cook, and bake, but above all, she, along with my dad, showed me the meaning of family and what it means to be a compassionate, caring person. Mum was the fixer—the one you could turn to for advice, a plaster for a scraped knee, or just a comforting hug. She was always there, even for her adult children. Losing her ability to care for herself after her stroke in 2023 was heart-wrenching, and something I never thought we would have to face. As a nurse I was always taught to treat patients as you would expect your own mum and dad to be treated.

After spending time in the Acute Stroke Ward at University Hospital Crosshouse, mum was transferred to Buchanan Ward at Biggart Hospital for rehab. It was a long, difficult road until she was moved to the McMillan Ward. But it was there, in the McMillan Ward, that she received the care that truly made all the difference.

The staff there—every single one, from the porters to the housekeeping staff, to the doctors and nurses—were incredible. They went above and beyond for us as a family, and more importantly, for my mum. The staff ensured that her care was always respectful, compassionate, and dignified and they understood our needs as a family.

Mum spent six months in the McMillan Ward, and I will always remember how every staff member treated her with such genuine

care, dignity, and respect. They treated her like she was their own mum. They were there for us in the most challenging of times, offering support and emotional warmth. They made us coffee, held our hands, and, above all, showed us that they truly cared. They allowed us to stay together as a family as mum's life came to an end, supporting us through our darkest days.

It's impossible to fully express how much their kindness meant to us, but I will be forever grateful for the way they cared for my mum, and for us.

What meant the most to me was knowing that the staff were not only supporting my mum, but also my dad. For eight months, he was there twice a day, caring for her in the ward. Regular as clockwork – the staff always knew the exact time to expect my dad. The staff became like family to him during that time—it became his routine, day in and day out. So much so that, after mum passed away, he even joked about applying for a job at the ward because he would miss seeing the staff every day.

As I look back on my mum's care, it's the small, thoughtful gestures that stand out. The staff in the McMillan Ward truly understood what was needed, and most importantly, they got it right for my mum. We as a family can never thank them enough, my mum would have wanted me to thank them.