

I'm Sharon and this is my daughter Kate and we come from Cork. Kate came into our life back in 2012. She has one brother and two sisters.

She's had a long road in those years and we still ran into difficulty with her and at the age of nine she went to Great Ormond Street where we got the diagnosis of chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction.

We were a long-term stay in Crumlin Hospital and we were told that we'd be introduced to Laura Lynn. I think a lot of parents, the minute they hear palliative care, a lot get cross. They get angry, they feel like you're giving up on their child, they think this place is only for sadness.

What are these people going to offer us that other places can't? And that's not what any of it is about. The sooner you join palliative care, the longer you can get out of it.

We're here to come in, get to know them as a family, not just the child, get them to be comfortable with a presence in their house, which is their safe space. She absolutely loves it, she does. And everyone is fantastic with her and she's kept going all the time. And even when she's not able to do things, it's just the interaction. Seeing her, talking to her, being with her. She loves it. Visits with Kate are high energy, high intensity when Kate is well. So Kate loves to play basketball. She loves to throw balls.

She loves the trampoline and you do it all with her. You sing as loud as you can, as many songs as you can. And they're always beautiful. But then at the same time, you know the day she's not up for those songs. Kate's not well. And the reality is... Only a nurse can look after this child in a lot of places.

So families would like to help with the care of the child, but their needs are very, very complex. We could go in on Monday and everyone's fine, everything's fine, the child as well. But all of a sudden the child could take a seizure,

have a temperature and suddenly their symptoms become quite difficult to manage. Mom and Dad have run through their ABCDs and you come to the door and they go, what can we do? So we sit down and we talk through it with them and then we come up with another plan.

Is this yours? What do you say? Kate did the Oscars in 2024 and back in 2024 was a terrible year for Kate to be fair.

I didn't really think that we would actually make the Oscars and get it because she only came out of hospital a few days prior to the Oscars. and Kate's siblings came up and stayed and their words were,

it's not what we thought, Mum, at all. It is beautiful. It's lovely. They loved it. Coming into Children's Palliative Care is one of the most rewarding nursing jobs you'll ever do.

It is a different level of nursing. It's a very, very holistic approach to an entire family. you take on different roles and you need to be willing to have fun when it's required but at the same time you need to be able to nurse in the background but on those tougher days you are literally there to be their silent support and their greatest crutch and it is one of the most rewarding jobs you'll ever do.