My name is Seán Brennan. Helen and I have been married since 1993. We have a 30-year-old son, Colm. Helen worked as an intensive care and theatre recovery nurse in UHG.

She retired in March 2021. Late in 2023, Helen felt that there was something wrong with her speech.

Helen was officially diagnosed with motor neurone disease in July 2024 coming up in two years and that's I suppose when this journey started.

I had no involvement with Galway Hospice, and I suppose like any hospice I had imagined it was very much palliative care in the latter stages of someone's illness whereas I've been pleasantly surprised with the services that can be provided.

Jamie McDonagh-Social Worker

I suppose often we meet families they're going through probably one of the most difficult times in their lives. One of our roles here as social workers is supporting carers. Through that first meeting we identified that Seán was in a pretty dark place at the time and through that meeting we came up with a plan that I was going to meet him one-to-one for a couple of months.

He noticed that the clouds were getting a little bit less darker and he's in a better place from when we first met. Since Helen was diagnosed, certainly my mental health has been challenged.

It can become a little bit overwhelming and see what lies ahead. But generally, through the counselling, the care support group,

I'm coming to terms with that, that I've really just got to fight that and deal with the now and the short-term future. And as I've already said, the short-term future for me is a week. Cairn is Monday to Sunday.

There's no break. and in particular with Sean, it was just to recognise the work he is doing as a carer that he mightn't identify as, he might just think, well I'm her husband,

I have to be doing this. It's helping them to realise what the amount of work they are doing. Since I started coming to Care Connect and to those meetings, those support group meetings, I find I'm able to express how I feel.

It's very important that any carer protects their own mental health and their ability to communicate. Not to be too hard on yourself. I think that's very important because it's something that has come to you and you've got to deal with it.

It's really just for carers to realise that they don't have to do this on their own. That we can take any job off their hands to make it a little bit easier and that's what we're here for.

I have now a completely different concept of what palliative care is about. The only advice I would give anyone is to engage as early as possible.