

Blog

"If this is over, if this is the end please let me hold you one last time" sung Swedish star Agnes in her hit "One last time".

Derek and Eirwin were married nearly 60 years ago. Four years ago, after she developed dementia, Eirwin moved into a care home only 5 minutes away in the Rhonda Valley. Derek visited Eirwin every day. But, by July this year, Derek had not seen or touched, let alone held, Eirwin. Ill with deteriorating liver cancer and emphysema, his doctors told him he needed end-of-life care.

The couple's son tried to organise a private ambulance to take Derek to see and touch his wife one last time. But he could not find any private companies with the specialised ambulance and resources required.

A family member then discovered the Ambulance Wish Foundation UK (AWF).

In 2015, NHS paramedic Alice Berrill, read about the established Dutch charity Stichting Ambulance Wens. Its mission is to give terminally ill patients the specialist transport and resources they need to fulfill their final wishes - at no cost to the patient. The Dutch charity had given rise to counterparts in Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Israel, but not in England. Someone involved with the Israeli branch, who was living in London, set to work and soon raised the substantial sums necessary to pay for a specially adapted palliative care ambulance.

We have now got teams of trained volunteers in London, East Anglia and York and ambulances in York and London. Wishes can be simple: a final visit home or to a place of personal significance; fish and chips at the seaside or a visit to family members. As Derek discovered, the AWF volunteers will drive the ambulance on a 5 hour journey to enable the person whose wish is being fulfilled to make a 5 minute journey.

The website ambulancewishfoundation.org.uk contains a form on which to submit a wish. AWF, with its specially adapted palliative care ambulance and team of trained volunteers, can make some things possible for those in palliative care - one last time.