

Commemorative account of Andrew Pooley
(from Tim & Mary Pooley)

My Brother, Andrew, was born in 1976 to an Irish family. His parents both had significant learning difficulties. Andrew and his 2 siblings were made wards of court and were each fostered separately across England. Andrew was taken by my parents, Jean and Don, when he was only 10 days old. My parents by that point had already short term fostered over 100 children. At the time, they lived in Kent. They moved to Wales when Andrew was about 10 years of age.

Before Andrew had turned 10, he had already been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and having a learning age of only 6. I had left home to get married when Andrew was only 7, but maintained excellent relations with my parents and Andrew. Whilst at a special school, Andrew had a friendship with a young girl who had similar learning problems. We later learned that she was the daughter of a famous TV producer. Unfortunately, Andrew [suffered a serious incident while at school] , so was withdrawn from the school. As soon as Andrew turned 18 years of age and was no longer a ward of court, my parents formerly adopted him.

During Andrew's teenage years and into his 20s, his illness made him progressively violent, not towards my parents or other people, but by destroying personal effects in the home. My parents maintained an extraordinary level of patience towards him. They recognised that it was only his illness that caused him to act in such a manner and appreciated that he was a loving and loveable young man.

The NHS attempted to treat Andrew with a variety of drugs, each with varying rates of success. Before he turned 30, he was successfully titrated on to [an anti-psychotic drug] It became possible to get a glimpse of the man he truly was. This had the desired effect of: -

- releasing him from the frightening mental images he had, caused by paranoia
- enabling him to remain calm and non violent
- stopping his physical ramblings and vocal utterances that arose out of anxiety and frustration.

Not many people knew Andrew very well, as he was shy and retiring, keeping himself to himself. For much of his life he would only venture out of the house with my dad. Those that knew him referred to him as a gentle giant.

One doctor called him a real gentleman. Although he could not stay in a social situation for long, he could at least follow the usual social niceties whilst meeting other people. He would then need to withdraw in to his own private space. All this was a marked change in his capacity to handle social situations and to control his behaviour.

Following my father's death in May 2012, we were all concerned as to how Andrew and my mum would be able to continue living independently in Wales. He had only made toast, cereal and gallons of Nesquik beforehand. The day following the funeral, with knowledge gained from watching cookery programmes, he made a dinner including both fish and sausages. It wasn't long before he was stripping a full chicken to make a curry, and even prepared his own chicken Kievs. He undertook many other household jobs. He started venturing out on long walks and making use of buses. He achieved all sorts of new goals. He became more self assured and independent.

My mother and Andrew tried to continue living at the family home in Wales, but by the end of 2013, it was becoming clear that they were finding it too difficult to maintain the house. My mother had significant health problems and it was too much to expect Andrew to cope with her needs. I made arrangements for both of them to move permanently to Witham in Essex, within walking distance of my own home. I found a modern rented ground floor flat that was large and comfortable for them both. On the moving day, Andrew wore his favourite shirt and said that he was returning to his native land, having been born in Greenwich. He walked through the new flat in Witham and told us that he loved it and it was just like a dream.

Andrew started walking around the town, visiting shops and cafes, some food shopping etc. I visited them twice a day to ensure they both had had their own respective medications, had sufficient meals and similar. I would do some shopping for them, take them out for a walk whilst pushing my mother in a wheel chair, go out occasionally in the car etc. He came out of his shell more and more. He was an incredibly contented and cheerful soul, in spite of being very aware of his illness and condition. We recall a visit to Heybridge Basin, which he adored. On returning to the car, he said that he had seen places like this on TV, but never imagined he would see such a place with his own naked eye! Just prior to his death, we were traveling in the car to London to see our aunt. He spoke up from the back and said, "Tim, I really enjoy my life. I feel like a king". We all became amazed by his natural determination to be cheerful in all circumstances. Although he plainly must have been in pain from time to time, he never complained. He would have a

little rest, then start afresh. He was like a adult sized child with great manners having been brought up so carefully. He was a ray of sunshine. If my mother had ever called out for him, he would jump up and thunder down the stairs to see what she needed.

He most certainly had a faith in God. It was a simple one, just as it ought to be. Intellect can be problematic. God wants us to come to him as children, which is exactly how his relation with God was.

We will fondly remember Andrew for his determination to stay positive in difficult situations, for his light hearted spirit and his cheerful, happy disposition.

Impact of Andrew's death

The greatest and hardest impact fell upon my mother. She had been there for Andrew from 10 days old to just past his 38th birthday. He had only ever lived with my parents. They were coping with life together in their new home in Witham. My mother recognised for herself how much the move had improved his life. She fully expected to see out her days at that flat before Andrew's death.

Following Andrew's death, my mother was almost unconsolable. It was clear that she felt there was now no reason for her life. She wanted to die and told me so every day for the next 6 years of her life. Although her physical health was hazardous, she had managed to keep on top of it by complying with her numerous medications. However, after Andrew's death, both her physical and mental health deteriorated dramatically. Before the year was out, [personal/sensitive] she was hospitalised for several weeks. She could no longer return to her home and needed to move into a local care home.

I was able to visit her each day. Her state of mind slowly improved, albeit that she would constantly tell me she wanted to die. By the end of 2015, both Mary and I could see the possibility of looking after her within our own home. She lived with us up to her death in October 2020. She had developed vascular dementia, which caused her to loose all her personality and many memories, but she always remember Andrew's appalling untimely death. Even though, at times, she seemed not to recognise me, she never lost sight of her memories of Andrew.

The impact upon Mary and I was in needing to cope with my mother's desperately poor reactions to Andrew's death and to help meet her daily needs. Andrew had done so much for her and I only needed to provide assistance for those matters which were too burdensome for him. Life became, understandably, fraught with anxiety for her well being and frustrations at how serious an impact Andrew's death had had on her. My mother's financial benefits were sufficient to cover all her needs, so we were at least spared the pressure of the additional living expense.

Due to the absence of Andrew all her needs were fulfilled by Mary and I. This naturally accounted for a high number of hours of devotion, under growing difficult conditions due to worsening ill health in body and mind. Although some care was provided by a care assistant, all medications were administered by myself, including the delivery of her daily insulin needs by way of an injection.

There was also a direct impact on Mary and me.

As we spoke to one investigation into Andrew's death after another, we never found it any easier to talk about what had happened to him and the awful situation he was in during his last days at the Linden Centre. It preyed on us that he had been alone, unable to receive visitors for the first two days, and was apparently treated as a problem rather than than the delightful person he was to us. It galled us that successive health service employees had completely ignored us when we said that he must not be allowed to run out of [his prescribed medication] When he was admitted to the Linden Centre we felt that at last he would get specialised care and be reintroduced to [his prescribed medication] Nothing could be further from the truth. Our good friend visited and had to beg staff to give him a drink of milk! He was in a very poor state and extremely frightened. Andrew was a very vulnerable man with learning difficulties. Nobody seemed to understand what care he should have.

Andrew died as a direct result of not having [his prescribed medication] and having an unmanaged withdrawal. It was not a good death. It is still something that causes us pain to think about, more than ten years after his death

We have included a picture of him at his 38th birthday party, a happy memory. The other picture provided was taken the year before his death in 2013, which shows, Andrew, my mother and myself.

We are very pleased that the inquiry into the disproportionate number of deaths at the Linden Centre is taking place. We would like to thank Baroness Lampard and the whole team for bringing light to this very dark situation.

Our daughter, Keziah, who was in her early twenties when Andrew died has also provided an impact statement, set out below:-

When I was a kid I didn't realise that my uncle Andy had learning disabilities and schizophrenia - he was just my shy, sweet uncle. After my grandad died it was like Andy decided to take on all his caring responsibilities without being asked. I was so proud of him. When they moved to Essex I was so happy to be able to spend more time with Andy and my grandma, and I loved taking them to new places. Andy was so excited. Every time he left the house he treated it as if it was the most special adventure - even if he was just going to the shops. He was so joyful about every new day.

When his medication ran out, we trusted completely that it would get started again without any problems. It seemed like such a simple thing to sort out. As Andy got more and more sick and more and more scared, we still thought that as long as we could get a doctor to listen, he would be ok. It wasn't until he'd already been in hospital for a week that I started to realise that no one was paying attention at all. Andy was catatonic, unable to speak or react at all. I was telling a nurse about what he was like as a person and she told me "we thought he was always like this". I was devastated to think that they had assumed my funny, sweet uncle was always silent and non-responsive, just because of his learning disabilities.

On the day before he died I went to visit him with my grandma. He was obviously scared and distressed - I don't think he was conscious but he looked like he was having bad dreams. My grandma was upset that she wasn't able to get through to him and I reassured her that he was in the right place and he would be fine. The next day we received a call to say he had died. I felt so guilty that I had told my grandma he would be ok. Even though I knew we had done everything we could, it was difficult not to feel guilty. My grandma never recovered from Andy's death. Andy was her light and it was like she had nothing else to live for. My parents looked after her so well for the rest of her life but when I visited you'd hear her praying under her breath "please God let me die". I feel so sad that my final memories of my uncle and my grandma have been overtaken by Andy's death - the memories of everything that happened are so much heavier and more vivid than the happy memories from the rest of my life.