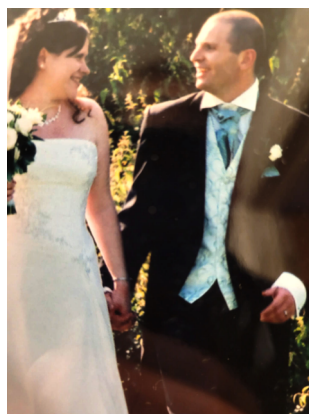


DAVID'S STORY



David Breuille has been with Harry's Rainbow since 2019. He joined very soon after his wife's death, having been signposted to Harry's Rainbow by several friends who knew what services were offered.

He met his wife, Sarah, in 2002, they got married in 2008 and had 2 children born in 2009 and 2012. In 2018 they enjoyed a child-free trip to Barcelona to celebrate their 10th year anniversary. Little did they know how precious that trip was, as not long after, Sarah, David's wife and the mother of their 2 daughters, had a stroke and died in January 2019.



Reeling from the death, David reached out to a variety of organisations for support, accessing Widowed and Young for himself, and Child Bereavement UK for his daughters. He registered with Harry's Rainbow and attended the first group the day before his wife's funeral. On a site where David connected with others through

Widowed and Young – Widowed and Young with Children, he mentioned that he was in Milton Keynes and another fellow member asked if he was aware of Harry's Rainbow when he disclosed that he was registered with them and intending to visit a group, they offered to meet him outside and walk in with him, giving him someone who could be there to help them settle in.

David was understandably anxious about attending the first group, especially at such an emotive time, and he did question if it was the right thing to be doing for himself and his girls. Those worries were soon dispersed, as David explains, *“I was immediately made to feel very welcome, we settled in and there were lots of very kind people”*. David is unusual in this sense, as research by Sue Ryder has found that 52% of bereaved men want to appear strong and as such may find it hard to reach out for, or accept, support.

Luckily, David saw the benefit of connecting to others and engaged in more and more activities offered by Harry's Rainbow. The family attended a summer fun day that included outdoor activities like archery and rock climbing, and the girls loved a trip to a local trampoline park.



OUR IMPACT

The biggest impact for David was the Christmas trips that are provided each year;

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“The biggest thing that made a difference was the Christmas events, at the time I felt a lot of pressure that we had to have fun things to do and there is a lot of admin and organisation to do these things. It was nice to have something organised and paid for, all I had to do was to respond and then turn up. This is really simple but makes a huge difference at a difficult time”.

David and his family have been lucky enough to have a couple of visits to the Rainbow Retreat, a caravan owned by Harry’s Rainbow at a caravan park in Camber Sands. The first visit he went with his late wife’s family, which was very special for them all. The second visit, he was able to bring his new partner, Jen, and this allowed them to spend time as a new blended family and get to know each other that little bit better. David outlines his journey to this point;



DAVID’S JOURNEY

“I was a single father for a year, then at the end of September 2019 I met Jen. I introduced her to my daughters in January 2020. The relationship developed quickly due to covid, and we moved in together in March 2020 as lockdown started. She adopted the girls; we got married in 2021 and had a son in 2020. We have since moved house, I’ve moved jobs and we’ve got a dog”.

When speaking about registering with Harry’s Rainbow, and his subsequent contact with the charity, David has nothing but praise. He has seen first-hand how meeting others who are bereaved has allowed his daughters to freely speak about their mum and what has happened to them, a stark contrast to someone he met on a trip with Widowed and Young, *“I noticed a difference between my daughters and their child, the other parent had not heard him talk about his father before, which he did once my daughters started talking about their mother”.*

As a male, David did not feel there were any barriers in his way that would stop him engaging with our services, although he did notice that most groups and events were very female heavy in attendance though, and the people he has met through the charity are all female. David did find the male only event he attended fun and was impressed with the staff at The Good Gym MK that allowed Harry’s Rainbow to run the day.



THE SARAH BREUILLY ROOM

David is lucky to have a good, varied support system and acknowledges that this has helped him ward off feelings of isolation and loneliness.

He did appreciate the extra support he received through Harry's Rainbow, and the subsequent advice he was given regarding asking about his wife, Sarah's care when she was ill in hospital. Due to this he was able to have answers to questions and knew which medical notes to ask for. This led to David being able to do something very special;

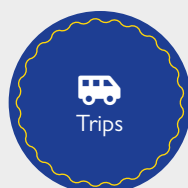
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“this led to meetings at the hospital which allowed me to identify shortfalls in care that would not have saved Sarah's life but may have had an impact on her care before she died. It also led to a change in service, and I am proud and happy that a Sarah Breuille room has opened at Luton and Dunstable hospital for families of stroke victims. This allows them to have a place to talk to the consultant, look at the scans and have a private space; there are leaflets and books with information, a model of a brain to help with visual explanations and it is a nice space that helps to explain what is happening to the stroke victim at a time of great shock for the families. There are also pictures and poems from me and the children. It is important there is a lasting legacy and something good has come from her death”.

David admits that he may be unusual as he is aware that many males do not open up about their feelings or feel able to reach out for support like he did. Research tends to agree with him, with 52% of men in a survey by Sue Ryder admitting to bottling up how they feel (*Men and grief: how to support a grieving man | Sue Ryder*). He is always thankful that he found Harry's Rainbow and hopes that they continue to offer their services, especially the stress-free days out that he found so helpful.



Please visit our website for more information about the services we provide



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