

## Obituary

# Win Fleming – the compassion warrior

**I**T IS with considerable sadness and grief that we write about the death of a very special woman, consultant clinical psychologist, colleague and friend.

Win worked in the NHS for 23 years, before leaving Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust in 2011 to set up as an independent psychologist, working most notably with the SALV mental health project at Shere Surgery in Surrey. Win was an active member of the Division of Clinical Psychology and was Honorary Secretary of the South East Branch up to her death.

Born and raised in Sheffield, Win was an outstanding pupil of Rainbow Forge Junior and Thornbridge Grammar School where she excelled academically (sciences), musically (violin and choir) and at a range of sports. Win spent two years at the University of Bath studying Sociology, before seeing the light and transferring to North East London Polytechnic (NELP) where she graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology. Her studies at NELP were funded by working as a casino croupier in the USA and the Caribbean!

After completing her training, Win devoted her life to working as a clinical psychologist. Win's career included working at Darenth Park Hospital, Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority, the Portnalls Unit, Bromley Health Authority, and Surrey & Borders NHS Foundation Trust in Guildford and, most latterly, at Hounslow & Spelthorne Community & Mental Health NHS Trust.

Adrian first chanced across Win when he moved to Surrey as a newly qualified clinical psychologist, based at the Ridgewood Centre near Frimley. He was still wet behind the ears, raring to go, and unsure of any ability to truly help others, but was very fortunate to have Win as a supervisor. She excelled in looking



after him, guiding him through contemporary professional issues facing the Psychology Department (remember them!). Adrian had also attended NELP, subsequent to Win, where, if there had been an ivory tower it would have been pinched sometime ago! Their education in the East End was rightly politicised and they shared a healthy scepticism about the motives of leaders, organisations, and their adherents!

Not content with looking after his professional needs, she also invited him to a somewhat exclusive tennis club and they both enjoyed the incongruity of his old Ford Fiesta parked next to a Bentley in the car park! They played tennis together, trying their best but not overly concerned about league standings (with her name, she was a born winner!), enjoying the social life of the club and sort of being in it, but apart from it too. Win had an effervescent source of fun and seemingly boundless energy, the phrase 'joie de vivre' seemed to be invented for her.

Shaheen first crossed paths with Win in 1995 when they were both working as psychologists in different parts of Surrey Oaklands. There was an instant bond and they strove to create an easily accessible and seamless service for clients in primary care. They spent many evenings (often finishing in the early hours) discussing how they could improve service delivery to their very complex client groups. What always impressed Shaheen was 'the depth and the wealth of Win's knowledge and experience, her aptitude for working hard, her kind and compassionate nature, and always

looking to do the best for her clients'. Not only were Shaheen and Win to support each other through their professional careers, but also in their personal lives. Shaheen recalls how 'Win and her husband Martin became extended members of her family with Win invariably being the life and soul of New Year's Eve and Burns Night celebrations.'

Win was a woman of conscience, with strong ethical values and was untiring in her efforts to promote social justice and to act as an advocate for her clients and those who were vulnerable. Friends and colleagues were constantly receiving emails from Win alerting them of various campaigns or worthy causes, be they people, animal or environmentally oriented. Win also had an uncanny knack of finding and rescuing injured wildlife, even if it meant missing an appointment, social event or even a flight. When she inherited an African Grey parrot, Win was determined to give George as much freedom and independence as she would have wanted, even if it meant George systematically destroying the house from the inside!

Always demonstrating an inquisitive scientific mind, Win was an independent, passionate and excellent clinician. Yet, underpinning her kind, warm and friendly exterior was a core of Sheffield steel. Win was always determined and stubborn when representing the needs of her clients and was not one to be told how many sessions a person would need for therapy!

Win will ultimately be remembered as someone who not only had infinite levels of compassion and positive energy, but also as someone who was totally non-judgemental and unconditional in her support for her clients and colleagues. Whilst many of us repeatedly go the extra mile in our professional life, Win's dedication and commitment to others went beyond the measurable.

Outside of work, Win brought the same levels of joy and wisdom to so many and was adored and treasured by her husband, brothers, nieces, friends and the local wildlife.

Win was diagnosed with Sarcoma Cancer in February 2020. She dealt with it fearlessly, without complaint and with more consideration for others than herself. She passed away quietly from this world on 8 July 2021.

Whilst heart breaking to lose such a truly good and life-enhancing person, Win has left us all with a template of how we should live our lives. And if you ever wish to honour her passing, get yourself a glass of pink champagne, put a sparkler in it and smile. She will know.

**Shaheen Shibli, Adrian Morton and Martin (husband)**

PS If you would like to read other tributes to Win or would like to leave your own, please go to <https://winfleming.com>