

FIGHTING

FOR LIFE



'FIGHTING FOR LIFE' Play

Pluto Productions

PRESENTATION BY

Dr Helen Findlay

@helenfindlay



'FIGHTING FOR LIFE'

A play by Brian Daniels
@BriBrdan



"I am proud to have written 'Fighting For Life'. This moving and emotional story has to be told"



BRIAN DANIELS, PLAYWRIGHT



- ◆ Award-winning playwright and theatre practitioner
- ◆ Chief Executive/Artistic Director of Pluto Productions - new and innovative plays around health and social issues
- ◆ 1997 to 2011, Artistic Director of New End Theatre, Hampstead and Artistic Director of the Shaw Theatre, Euston
- ◆ Produced more than 200 new plays, musicals and cultural events as well as large scale theatrical events and concerts.

“This play is an excellent, thought-provoking way to introduce a difficult but vital subject”



SETTING THE SCENE



Jim and Joan
Findlay

Dementia and Motor Neurone Disease

Joan had dementia for 8 years and lived with Jim, her husband of over 60 years who cared for her at home. Jim was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease at the age of 85 and died seven weeks later.

End of life journey

‘Fighting For Life’ is a story about love and devotion between generations. It shows the struggles of a family trying to access health and social care for their elderly parents as they both moved towards the end of their lives. It has been inspired by The Findlay Report.

Family's attempt to communicate constructively with health and social services professionals



THE FINDLAY REPORT

We need to do something

THE FINDLAY REPORT

Case study on the handling of Motor Neurone Disease by UK health and social services

This case study is an analysis of the treatment received by our father, James Findlay, just prior to confirmation that he had motor neurone disease (confirmed on 25 October 2005 by MND specialist) up until his death on 30 December 2005.

It has been written by members of his family who were directly involved with his care over a four month period.

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An hour after James Findlay died, his four children, their partners and two grandchildren were sat in a side room at the hospital reflecting on what had happened over the previous months and it was agreed that what had happened to him could not be left to stand.

The result was the publication in 2006 of a case study. It was drawn together and written by his children, Helen and Margot, with contributions from Andy and Stuart and family members.



THE FINDLAY REPORT

Chronology covering four months in period up to Jim's death and recommendations for how things could have been better for all

MAIN FINDINGS

- ◆ When person diagnosed with terminal condition, 'conductor' to be appointed to stand shoulder to shoulder with the individual and family to project manage the whole health & social care processes and 'bang tables' as necessary
- ◆ Communication, Communication, Communication
- ◆ Better co-ordination within and between health and social care – do away with departmentalism
- ◆ Family to be regarded by health and social care professionals as members of the care team



WHERE IT STARTED



Brian Daniels was commissioned by Helen Findlay in 2017 to write 'Fighting For Life'

- ◆ Brian and Helen met for first time in 2016 at an event organised by the National Council for Palliative Care (now Hospice UK) in Westminster
- ◆ Talked about The Findlay Report and after reading it, Brian came to understand the difficulties the family experienced
- ◆ Combined with media reports about older, vulnerable people and their medical and social care challenges, Brian decided to write a play based on the Findlay family story.

*Great voices. Great acting.
Brought the frustration to life.*



PERFORMANCES AND Q&A

- ◆ Radio-style where the actors sit facing the audience and read from the the script, in character
- ◆ Four professional actors play the parts of 'Jim' and 'Joan' (parents); 'Sandra' (daughter, composite of four adult children) and one actor playing a variety of health and social care professionals including consultant, GP, social worker and care home manager
- ◆ Premiered in January 2018, hosted by Marie Curie at their Hampstead Hospice and performed across the UK in hospices, hospitals, community theatre and a church
- ◆ A question and answer session with an expert panel follows each performance and is an integral part of the whole event.

“It was the deep emotional pull that had the biggest impact”



WHY A PLAY?

- ◆ Enabled difficult issues around palliative and end of life care for older people to be aired through story-telling
- ◆ Takes ‘The Findlay Report’ to another stage (literally) by helping to create a wider understanding of the complexities around accessing good quality health and social care and provides a supportive discussion, education and learning environment for those attending
- ◆ Reaching people at a deep emotional level can enable introspection and be an encouragement for initiating change, both individually and possibly collectively
- ◆ Enabled voices to be heard and views shared leading to potential influence on practice and decision-making on care of older people.



“The play portrayed the devotion of this couple after more than 60 years of marriage and the stress that being separated caused them”

Authentic

“Showed the love and determination of their children as they tried to get the help their parents needed”

“Well presented – brings to life the reality of MND”

“The chat afterwards was very insightful”

“Our generation is in the same boat – we can’t have the status quo for our children”

Honest

Thought provoking

“Made me think more about how we can get the message out there about accessing services/communication”

“Persuaded me to change my thinking and behaviour towards those I am caring for that have dementia”

THANK YOU!



www.fightingforlife.org.uk

TO FIND OUT ABOUT HOSTING
A PERFORMANCE OF
'FIGHTING FOR LIFE'

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