# Case study four: Frank

Frank and Tilly are in their 80s and have been married for 62 years. Frank and Tilly don’t have any family of their own. They used to be very active in the community and regularly attended church. Recently they have become more reclusive as their mobility has decreased. Tilly has been diagnosed with advanced cancer and told it is unlikely she will live for more than a few months.

Frank and Tilly have always looked after each other. Now that Tilly is ill, Frank is doing what he can to make sure that his wife gets everything she needs. A nurse came to see Tilly at home last week, but Frank is not sure what her name is or where she was from. He has found it hard to take in everything he has been told about what is going to happen. Frank is anxious about giving Tilly her tablets, especially as he knows that some of the painkillers are very strong drugs. Frank has never been in a situation like this and does not know what he should be doing for the best. Tilly has been feeling quite weak, and is struggling to get to the toilet in the night so Frank has been helping her. They forgot to mention this to the nurse.

Before they knew about Tilly’s illness, Frank and Tilly had both made wills, and discussed how they would be like to be buried together in the local cemetery. However, since Tilly received her diagnosis Frank has not spoken to Tilly about her wishes for the future. He is worried that if he raises the subject it will impact on how she copes, and he doesn’t want to upset her, or himself.

Tilly had always looked after the house, but is unable to do this now. Frank is struggling to do the housework, and look after Tilly. His own health is suffering, and last week Frank tripped and fell over.