

# The right kind of care...



I WOULD like to introduce you to two women, both now dead.

They were both around the same age and lived in the same part of Stockport, but that is where the similarity ends.

One was a strong woman, who was the anchorpoint of a close and loving family.

When she was not devouring books or on day trips with family and friends, she could often be seen regaling people with stories about her life.

Always there at the heart of the family gathering, always chatting to neighbours, always visible — that is what Jessie Macdonald was.

The other woman was quiet and often out of sight. She had that resigned look of someone who was a little tired of life and her books lay unread for weeks.

In truth these women are the same person, and only weeks apart.

An active woman in 1993, Jessie shunned the constraints normally associated with being 90 and her social life was vibrant

When she suffered a stroke she struggled to cope and moved into a nursing home near-by, but her spirits remained buoyant.

However, only days into her stay, Jessie's bubbly persona went into retreat and weeks later, she was dead.

Her grand-daughter, Gillian Nuttall, who works at Ralli, picks up the tale.

She said: "My grandma changed almost overnight when she went into that home. She became withdrawn and whenever we visited her she was sitting in her room staring out of the window. Her sparkle had gone."

But, as Jessie's family tried their best to lift her out of her

HERE in the UK, we market ourselves as a civilised nation. We enjoy democracy and have a battery of charitable organisations to protect the most vulnerable. But underneath this veneer lurks a guilty secret.

Each year, abuse in a small number of nursing homes condemns thousands of elderly people to end their days in isolation, misery and, all too often, pain.

Manchester law firm Ralli has become the first in the country to set up a website for people who are concerned about the care their loved

ones are receiving in nursing homes. It has proved so popular that the firm has set up a department to deal with nursing-home abuse cases.

And one of the inspirations for the venture is a Shaw woman who witnessed first-hand what happens when nursing-home care goes badly wrong.

JENNY HOLLAMBY spoke to her. . .



malaise, they noticed a bruise on her head.

Jessie had fallen out of bed, but staff were evasive about why the protective side bars designed to prevent such an accident had not been used and they refused to let family members take her to hospital.

Gillian said: "Even though we kept asking if we could take her, they were adamant she didn't need to go.

"The next time I went in, they were trying to get her out of her chair and she was literally wincing in pain. She looked really ill.

"They actually said to me 'she's not hurt, she just won't walk because she's being lazy'.

"How can someone say that about a woman who worked until she was in her mid-seventies?"

Days later, the family got a call from the hospital and it was revealed that Jessie had



GILLIAN NUTTALL

broken a hip in the fall. "They had been trying to make her walk around for three days with a broken hip." Gillian said. "It's no wonder she was in agony."

Unfortunately, medical intervention came too late and Jessie developed pneumonia and died five days after her fall.

## Radio survey's stark figures

MARTIN COYNE, managing partner at Ralli, said: "We have taken several cases to court since we set up this department at the end of 2006 and have also dealt with hundreds of phone calls from

concerned relatives, including some from Oldham."

According to a survey conducted by GfK NOP for BBC Radio 2 in June, 2006, a quarter of the 1,000 people

questioned said that they knew an elderly person who had been mistreated.

According to those polled, 53 per cent of this neglect had taken place in a care home.

THERE are thousands of good care homes and these organisations can help you find the right one:  
**Commission for Social Care Inspection**  
 0845 015 0120  
**Action on Elder Abuse**  
 0808 808 8141

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### SELECTION

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