



AUTUMN/WINTER 2023

# NEWS

Greenwich & Bexley  
Community Hospice

**Let's remember  
and celebrate, together**

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# WELCOME

**As the nights draw in and we find ourselves in the full throes of autumn, it can be a tricky time of year for many. With Christmas just around the corner, you might feel a pressure to feel excited, or to get involved with parties and events.**



**B**ut, if you're remembering and missing a loved one, the thought of all the festivities can be difficult. You'll find articles and diary dates showing how the hospice is embracing Christmas in this newsletter, however, if that doesn't feel like something you want to hear about, there are lots of other stories and information for you to read too.

Away from the celebrations, Christmas also offers a time to remember. Many of you will have heard of, or been part of, our 'Lights of Love' campaign. It's something we do every year; people dedicate a light on our Christmas tree to remember their loved ones, whilst supporting the hospice through a donation. There will also be a service on Sunday 10th December which is open to all who would like to come. It's always a very moving event and you are

very welcome. More information is available on the pull out in this newsletter.

Finally, 2024 is a very special year for us as it marks 30 years since our founders, Pat and Don, welcomed the first patients into the hospice. Until then, there was no hospice care on offer in Greenwich and Bexley; what they did was, in my mind, incredible. Find out in the coming pages how we're marking the occasion and why we'd love you to be involved.

As always, all my thanks,

Kate Heaps  
Chief Executive

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# Help us celebrate 30 years



**As we approach 2024, we also approach three decades of Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice being here.**

Over that time, we've supported thousands of patients and families across the two boroughs; each and every one of them unique and special and each and every one of them cared for because of the community coming together. Because of your support, we've been able to be here. Be this through working or volunteering with us, attending a fundraising event, reading our newsletter, donating goods and enjoying some retail therapy in our shops – the list goes on.

We want to thank you and commemorate the last 30 years, celebrating all that we've achieved and looking to all we will achieve, together,

over the next 30.

To do this we want to hear from you. However you've been involved with the hospice, big or small, we'd love to chat and hear about your memories of the hospice and share photos, stories and recollections of the wonderful people who have been a part of this organisation over the last 30 years.

**Please do get in touch if you'd like to be a part of the celebration by sharing your story. You can give us a call on 020 8312 2244 or email: [30years@gbch.org.uk](mailto:30years@gbch.org.uk)**

We'll have a special newsletter next spring, so watch out for it.





# Tracy 'came back to life at the hospice'

**Colin Campbell, 52, from Bexleyheath, spent 18 months caring for his partner Tracy Clifton following her diagnosis of a rare type of cancer. He says her final precious weeks when she was cared for at Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice's Inpatient Unit (IPU) were a real gift to the couple.**

**T**racy was a force of nature to those who loved her – someone with a natural spark and zest for life, who could strike up a conversation with a total stranger.

She loved nothing more than heading off on her next great adventure, had travelled all over the world, loved gardening, cooking and baking, meeting up with friends, and had enjoyed a long career in the rail industry. In fact, as her partner of 15 years Colin fondly recalls, there was 'never enough time in her day'.

'Tracy pushed me to do things I wouldn't have, before I met her. My nickname for her was Dora the Explorer', Colin tells us. 'I was the calmer one, so we made a great team.'

'That's why when Tracy, someone who had always been so healthy and active, was diagnosed with stage 4 rectal cancer, it came as a real shock.'

'It's quite a rare cancer,' Colin says. 'It hadn't spread but they could only try to shrink the tumour.'

'Tracy was put under the care of Kent Oncology Centre and for three months had chemotherapy followed by daily radiotherapy. Tracy's was a cruel cancer, but from the start she was positive and never

lost this outlook. Tracy was born with mild cerebral palsy so had always been a fighter, and her view was: 'We'll take this on and beat it.' She was determined.'

Sadly the cancer didn't fully respond to treatment and Tracy became progressively more ill and housebound. It was also very challenging for Colin, who was now her main carer.

'Becoming a carer changes your relationship but it's just what you do for someone you love,' he says.

Thankfully the couple were referred to the hospice, and despite not knowing what to expect initially, went on to access life-changing support that transformed their quality of life in the last month they spent together. In fact, Colin says that the hospice's incredible team helped Tracy to feel more like herself, the person 'with a smile'. One with a smile and happiness – not burdened by pain and illness.'

He continued: 'We had a visit from the hospice doctor and the nurses and it gave us an insight into the incredible work they do. From the start, the experience was about making Tracy's life as good as it could be for as long as possible.'

'It was important that they were talking



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**‘Tracy pushed me to do things I wouldn’t have, before I met her. My nickname for her was Dora the Explorer.’**

.....



to us both. There was the recognition that it's very hard for the patient's partner too, that I was on my own journey.'

After suffering a couple of falls at home, Tracy spent some time on the hospice inpatient unit.

'I got the old Tracy back for those weeks – that was the gift the hospice gave us' Colin told us. 'All the worry disappeared. We could relax and spend time together as a couple knowing Tracy's care was taken care of.'

'Her room had a lovely view of the hospice's sensory garden and as someone who was very green-fingered this was a massive deal. The staff were able to bring her out to enjoy sitting in the garden in the sunshine.'

'Tracy said it was the little things the hospice staff did for her that made the difference. They washed her hair and one of the

**'I got the old Tracy back for those weeks – that was the gift the hospice gave us.'**

volunteers did her nails and it made her feel so much better. The hospice focused on her wishes and care and made sure she was a central part of the process.

'I went into the hospice every day and we'd sit and do a crossword together. Tracy's parents, Les and Kay, could also visit her regularly. She came back to life in the hospice and in turn the reassurance the hospice brought to Tracy's loved ones was like ripples on water – it touched so many people.'

'I have some wonderful memories to treasure, particularly the Jubilee Tea

Party celebrations, where Tracy enjoyed being the centre of attention, eating the beautiful cakes and sandwiches made by the hospice and wearing her purple knitted HRH heart which now sits proudly on my desk at home as a daily reminder of some of those precious moments we enjoyed.'

When Tracy died, the hospice staff were very supportive, discussing what would happen with him, Colin tells us.

'At the hospice the team build a bond of friendship with their patients, and the families too. The care they offer means you can concentrate on what's really important.'

'The hospice managed to give me back the old Tracy I knew and loved and I'll never be able to thank them enough. Thanks to them, even at the end she was enjoying her life.'



Greenwich & Bexley  
Community Hospice

# Could you be a lucky winner? **LOTTERY**

**Margaret Carter recently found herself celebrating a £1,600 rollover win through playing our hospice lottery. She kindly came in to talk to us about it, and to tell us why she has supported the charity for many years.**

I've lived locally to the hospice for 48 years. I remember when your founders Pat and Don were first campaigning to get things off the ground. I thought it was a brilliant idea and so needed. Not just for patients, but for their families too; I know people who have been supported very well by the hospice over the years.

'I've played the lottery since 2010 and have gone along to events and contributed at plant sales, taking part in the tombola, things like that.

'It was such a lovely surprise to win the lottery. Lucy [hospice lottery officer] called and left me a voicemail on the Friday to tell me the news and I couldn't wait until Monday to find out the details.

'It's come at the perfect time - my husband and I have just moved to a new house to be closer to our grandchildren and there's so much to do. This money will really help. I'm going to donate some back to the hospice too.

'If people can support the hospice, the lottery is a lovely way to do so. And you may just get lucky and win!'



➔ Find out more and sign up to our lottery today.  
[communityhospice.org.uk/lottery](https://communityhospice.org.uk/lottery)



# It's about care home residents too



**A big part of what we do at the hospice is to make sure people are cared for and supported in the place of their choice. This is often in people's homes and for many that means a residential or nursing home.**

**L**isa, Elaine, and Alex, aka the hospice's Three Musketeers, visit people at over 20 residential and nursing homes across the Royal Borough of Greenwich and London Borough of Bexley. When they meet patients for

the first time, they do an assessment of the whole person, looking at their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. This often means speaking with families, helping them to understand their loved one's preferences. They may also make recommendations to their GPs or carers, and support the residential or nursing home staff to feel confident in providing the best possible care to them.

Lisa is a specialist nurse who has been at the hospice for 12 years. She told us 'A big part of what we do is education. We run monthly sessions with residential and nursing home staff to help them feel empowered and confident when supporting people who are nearing the end of their lives. We have guest speakers with different specialisms from speech and language therapists to doctors, nurses and faith leaders talking



about different topics each time. It's a community of people learning from each other and wanting the best for patients.'

The team are also committed to making sure quality of life is at the forefront of care. Sometimes this means managing more complex symptoms and helping people to stay at home rather than be admitted to hospital. For some people it can be as simple as having their dog come to visit them. They'd be able to have them at home or in the hospice, so we advocate for the same in care and nursing homes,' Lisa said.

Elaine, who joined the hospice two years ago to support care and nursing homes during Covid, said 'The pandemic was a very difficult time for homes, but we made sure we kept visiting and kept supporting patients, families and staff. We built strong relationships and trust, and since then have continued to work well together.

'I'm currently caring for a gentleman who absolutely loves golf. He used to play morning, noon, and night! He was feeling very low about not being able to play, and so we downloaded some golfing games for his iPad and are arranging a visit to a local golf club where he'll be out and about in a golf buggy. He's like a totally different person; he's so much happier; laughing and joking. We want to do everything we can to make the person's quality of life as good as can be.'

**'We run monthly sessions with care and residential home staff to help them feel empowered and confident when supporting people who are at the end of their lives.'**



**'M**y name is Lesley and I am a GP in Bexley. I have been involved

**with the hospice since 2015.** The hospice's Care Home Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS') contact me if they have any concerns and I liaise with them and other members of the team about my own patients.

It is so important for everyone working in and with care homes to be supported to gain confidence in their palliative care skills, and knowledge in areas such as symptom management at the end of life. This support can be what makes the difference between people having a peaceful and comfortable experience of end-of-life care, dying in the place that has become their home with familiar carers around them, and having to be admitted to hospital – something lots of people and families desperately want to avoid.

We work together as a team and I believe that the familiarity the care home staff have with the hospice's CNS', and their trust in the knowledge and experience of both the CNS' and myself, built through long term working relationships, can be a key factor in patients avoiding hospitalisation.'

# Our care doesn't stop at Christmas

**Rick Sperinck spent his final Christmas on the Inpatient Unit at the hospice last year, surrounded by his loved ones. His daughter, Angie, recalls the time fondly.**

**‘W**e got to spend our last family Christmas together at the hospice.

The nurses came in dancing around, dressed as elves, and my dad immediately put on a Santa hat. We look back at the photos now and smile; we were all able to be together and it's a really lovely memory. I'm so thankful for the selflessness of the nurses. Even

on Christmas Day they sacrificed being with their own families, and that allowed me to be with my dad.

'There're honestly not enough thank yous in the world to express how thankful I am. My family and I will never forget the nurses and what they've done here.'



# TOP OF THE SHOPS



**With 16 shops across Greenwich and Bexley, there's plenty of retail therapy on hand if you're after a bargain. That's one of the reasons why we've started some refurbishing. We want to make sure our shops are welcoming, accessible for everyone and a great experience for all who shop in or work there.**

**W**e've started with Bellegrove Parade, New Eltham and Erith. Each shop has been spruced up and now has new lighting that is both cheaper to run and better for the environment; freshly painted walls that make the shops nice and bright; and new fixtures and fittings meaning we have more more space on the shop floor. Denise, one of our shop managers said 'The shop looks so light and bright, it's easier to see the items and to shop them. We hope our customers love the changes as much as we do!'

Our shops wouldn't be what they are without the wonderful volunteers that make them. The role they play in

the shops is so important for lots of reasons. Our volunteers are there to receive the donations people kindly make to us, which can sometimes be a very emotional moment for them. They also help to stock the shop, create eye-catching window displays, chat with customers and even give fashion advice if wanted!

Without people donating, shopping and volunteering, our shops wouldn't be able to continue and the money made makes such a difference to the hospice. So thank you to everyone involved.

If you're interested in becoming a volunteer in one of our shops, our Volunteering Team would love to hear from you.



📧 You can email our Volunteering Team on [volunteersdept@gbch.org.uk](mailto:volunteersdept@gbch.org.uk) or call 020 8320 5812







# Students unite for hospice care

**We** are always amazed by the support we receive from our local community. This time, it's a group of wonderful students from the University of Greenwich who are setting up a society to help young people hear more about us and get involved!

We chatted with Hira, Vice President of the Greenwich Hospice Society, to understand more about what she wants to achieve with the help of other students.

## What made you set up the society?

Setting up the society is the best way to build a bridge between the hospice and the university. Helping the hospice in any way we can would be the most wholesome way to finish my last year of uni and it's also a great opportunity for students to gain valuable experience for example related to health care, event management, or planning.

## What do you want the society to achieve?

We want to make sure that the society is available to help the hospice whenever they need it in terms of providing volunteers and fundraising. I also want to make sure that the students at University of Greenwich have the opportunity to gain experience in health care, research or events planning by being part of the society.

## Why should other students sign up?

The plans we have made and the events we want to execute makes us, quite possibly, the best society to be a part of. It's a mixture of fun activities related to fundraising as well as volunteering, taking up roles such as becoming a Compassionate Neighbour, where you will help people in the local community and be provided with training to do so.

## You came to visit the hospice. What did you think?

What I had in mind when I thought about the hospice completely changed when I got to visit the place. Starting from its beautiful and scenic location and the people working there who seem to be the best at their profession, I believe the hospice to be a great place for individuals. And thinking about the great work that they do for others in the community, I think very highly of everyone working there.



### **Simran Kaur, our Community Development and Engagement Manager tells us:**

**I** am excited about this society as I believe it shows the importance of young people improving their local community through compassionate care. It's great to see people supporting each other and having a group of students who can have difficult conversations about death is a true social shift.

I am thrilled to see the leadership skills of these young people who have utilised their own experiences of loss to support others also.'

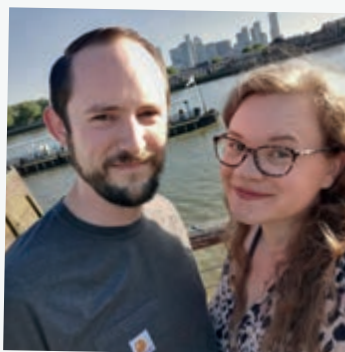


You can keep up to date with everything the Greenwich Hospice Society gets up on Instagram: **greenwich\_hospice\_society**



# The hospice doesn't just care for the person who's dying

**Emma Woodbridge is living proof that terminal illness can hit anyone at any time. Having tragically lost her beloved husband Jack to stomach cancer when their daughter Niamh was only two, she needed care and support from a place that understood her family's personal story and that's where the hospice stepped in...**



Jack and Emma

the specialist team at the hospice for care, advice, practical support, and perhaps most importantly a compassionate listening ear when they needed it the most.

'Getting cancer and dying isn't something that discriminates,' Emma explains. 'It can happen to you at any age. We need to

think more about the impact that losing a parent has on a child, and how your whole world as a partner changes overnight.'

Fortunately this is a conversation that Emma has been able to have with the knowledgeable and caring staff at the hospice.

'Death is a part of mine and Niamh's story,' Emma says. 'Her daddy died and that's heartbreaking. You can feel very alone but the hospice is there to support you. They don't just care for the person who is dying, but also the loved ones left behind.'

The hospice contacted Jack and Emma in October 2021 and from that point on were on hand 24/7, whenever the couple needed it – whether it was to discuss Jack's medication and pain management or to talk through the feasibility of them making a much-wanted last family trip with Niamh to Legoland.

Emma has had to cope with a huge amount in just a few short years.

She met the love of her life, her husband Jack, in June 2016. Over the next two years the couple got engaged, then married and went on to have their daughter Niamh in January 2020.

But everything changed when Jack was unexpectedly diagnosed with stomach cancer in September 2021 when he was just 31. Even harder to process was the fact that the disease was very advanced and had spread to his liver and bones. Emma and Jack were heartbroken to discover his cancer was terminal, and they turned to





**'I didn't realise how much help hospices provide. Just knowing I could speak to someone at any time was a lifeline for me.'**

'The hospice nurses made home visits to us and we discussed everything with them,' Emma remembers. 'They knew us, knew Niamh and really understood our personal difficulties. They helped provide us with equipment like toileting aids, yet got the level of care Jack wanted just right. Nothing was ever too much.'

Sadly Jack died in hospital in March 2022, just a day after returning home from Legoland.

'I was there when Jack took his last breath,' Emma says. 'Nothing prepares you for it. I'd called the hospice the night before he died and one of the nurses called me in hospital.'

'They'd been so pleased for us that we'd got to

Legoland and that was lovely.

'I didn't realise how much help hospices provide. Just knowing I could speak to someone at any time was a lifeline for me.'

This festive season Emma and Niamh will be dedicating a light in Jack's memory on the Christmas tree at the hospice Lights of Love Service, which is open to all. It's a lovely way to remember a cherished family member or friend at the same time as raising vital funds for the hospice.

'The care and consideration we received from the hospice was amazing,' Emma says.

'Hospices aren't places where people go to die, it's everything else in between.'



**Jack and Niamh**

# Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice

*Lights  
of Love*

## Dedicate a light to someone special

Join us at our hospice service on Sunday 10th December, where you will be able to place a star on our tree and view your dedications in the Names of Remembrance presentation. The hospice welcomes you between 4 - 7pm, with a service of remembrance at 5.30pm for those who wish to attend.

### 1 First, please check your personal details and amend if incorrect.

Name,  
Address 1, Address 2, Address 3, Postcode

Segment RE ID

### 2 Please tell us the name(s) of the loved one(s) for whose memory you wish to dedicate a light to on our tree. All names will be displayed in our Names of Remembrance presentation provided we receive these no later than 4th December 2023. Please write clearly, IN CAPITALS.

☐ Please tick this box if you do not wish your loved one(s) name(s) to be shown in our presentation.

### 3 Next, we ask you to kindly make a donation towards Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice care of our patients and families.

☐ £20 ☐ £30 ☐ £50 Your own preferred gift of: £

Your payment details:

☐ Please find enclosed a cheque (made payable to: Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice)

☐ Please debit my Maestro\* / Delta\* / Visa\* / MasterCard\* (\*delete as appropriate)

Card number

Expires

(Maestro only)

Signature: ..... Date: .....

If you would like to receive an acknowledgement, please tick: ☐ By post ☐ By email

Simply go to  
**communityhospice.org.uk/  
christmas** to make your  
dedications and donations  
quickly online.

# Lights of Love

## 4 Please Gift Aid my donations

*giftaid it*

I confirm that I am a UK Income or Capital Gains taxpayer. I have read this statement and want to Gift Aid this donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

☐ Yes, Gift Aid my donations to the Hospice in the last 4 years and all future donations until further notice.

☐ No, I am not a UK tax payer, please do not Gift Aid my donations.

You may cancel this declaration at any time, and you must notify us if your tax paying status changes.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

## 5 Keeping in touch

We would like to send you information about our fundraising and events, and other ways in which you can help us. We will write to you by post unless you ask us not to. Please tell us if there are other ways you'd like to hear from us.

- ☐ Yes, I am happy to receive text messages
- ☐ Yes, I am happy to receive emails
- ☐ No, I do not wish to receive occasional phone calls
- ☐ No, please don't send me information by post

## 6 Finally please write a message remembering your loved one on a Memory Star.

You can send your star back to us, along with our dedication form and donation in the enclosed freepost envelope. All dedications received by Monday 4th December will be shown in our Names of Remembrance presentation at the service on Sunday 10th December, between 4 - 7pm.

**Please send this form along with your donation in the freepost envelope provided, or return to:**

**Freepost RTJU-GSSJ-KEAS, Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice, 185 Bostall Hill, London, SE2 0GB.**

For more information about Lights of Love please contact the Fundraising Team at 020 8320 5785 or [team@gbch.org.uk](mailto:team@gbch.org.uk)

Greenwich & Bexley  
Community Hospice

Registered Charity No. 1017406



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**



# Dates for your diary



More information on all our festive events and activities at  
**[communityhospice.org.uk/christmas](https://communityhospice.org.uk/christmas)**



Greenwich & Bexley  
**Community Hospice**

185 Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood,  
London, SE2 0GB

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