

OUR LIVES AND LOVED ONES

COMMUNITY HOSPICE NEWS

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO
**LIVE AS WELL
AS THEY CAN,
FOR AS LONG
AS THEY CAN**

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**COMMUNITY
HOSPICE**

For the people of
Greenwich & Bexley

SPRING 2025

MAKING SURE WE'RE HERE FOR YEARS TO COME

It's only March but there's so much to fill you in on since our last newsletter. It's been a busy time for us at the hospice. Last year marked our 30th anniversary which was a real chance to remember our incredible founders, celebrate the care the hospice has provided and the community who made this happen, and look to the future and how we can continue to develop and grow.

It held some real highlights; we updated our brand so that we look and sound more like the organisation we are. Often when people think of hospices they think of sadness and yet, whilst we do not shy away from the sad times, there are also times of such joy and of families making memories. We had the world renowned Lang Lang International Music Foundation, plus their very special guests come to the hospice and perform for patients and families at Christmas. We regularly have a weekly get

together for people living with dementia and their loved ones and carers, where you'll often find people dancing and laughing.

In this edition of the newsletter, you'll read the incredible story of Anushka and her sons Aidan and Arun, who made special memories with their husband/daddy, Mike, who was supported by the hospice so that he could die at home surrounded by the people he loved most. It's stories like these that remind us of the importance of hospice care and makes me so proud to lead this organisation. Mike's family's experiences show courage, and also how the hospice is there for not just the person that's dying, but all those that are impacted.

We joined up with Hospice UK and 142 other hospices across the country, to be a part of a campaign shedding light on hospices and the importance of gifts in wills. It's the first time nationally that

hospices have come together to do something like this and it was brilliant. We did this because we need people to know that we are there for them and show the breadth of hospice care. We did this because we know that we need to make sure we raise funds for our care. And we did this because we believe in the importance of hospices.

This newsletter also features an update on our newly established volunteering team. There's no doubt about it; we couldn't do what we do without volunteers. They are nothing short of incredible. Our team is there to help support them in their roles, and make sure they are given the best possible experience with us.

Finally, I'm off to the Sahara this month to trek for four days in the desert heat and raise funds!

Not just me either, a group of my nursing colleagues did the same challenge last year, and one of our fundraising team is joining me and 25 hospice supporters this time round. It's an exciting challenge and one that I hope means we raise lots of money for Community Hospice. Wish me luck!

A big thank you to each and every person who continues to run, bake, read this newsletter or share our posts on social media – we are forever grateful.

Thank you,



Kate Heaps,
Chief Executive



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ANUSHKA'S STORY

Anushka and her two sons, Aidan, 9, and Arun, 7, from Sidcup, were supported by the hospice in 2024 as Anushka's husband and the boys' dad, Mike, died at home in July, just days after his 58th birthday.

As we sat in Anushka's kitchen and spoke about her experiences over a cup of coffee, it was impossible not to be moved; she's someone that demonstrates such strength as well as openness. Here she tells us about how the hospice was able to support the whole family including help around telling her children their daddy was dying, and how she wishes that talking about dying was less of a taboo, as people talking about what was happening has been a big help. We also talk all about Mike, who by all accounts was quite the character. He was a man that valued family above all

else - and manners, as is clear in their incredibly warm, friendly and polite boys – which Anushka tells us is testament to him.

MY HUSBAND, MIKE

"Mike was a real gentleman – he'd always do things like hold doors open and carry bags. He was a great dad too and loved his boys. In fact, one of the things that I thought was so special about him when we first met was how he talked about his first son, my stepson, Martin. Martin was his whole world. This was shown during his cancer and treatment too. It was 2009 when Mike first had cancer and had both

chemo and radiotherapy, having the treatment again when it came back two years later. Years later the consequences of radical treatment meant he would gradually lose his functions; eventually not being able to speak, walk, eat or breathe without a breathing tube and 24 hour ventilation. Through the continued loss of abilities he fought and persevered because he wanted to be there for Martin and later for Aidan and Arun too.

"But it felt like the cancer was always there, just behind you, and you learn to live with the fear. And you do, for love. I just loved him. It was January 2024, after two years of being in hospital and doctors scratching their heads about what to do, when we were told that Mike's condition was terminal. Mike never accepted his prognosis; he was courageous, brave and dedicated to his family. He was also a very funny man; he made me laugh so much. Even from his hospital bed!"

OUR FAMILY

"I had to be strong for my husband and for my kids. But I was so desperate and so lost and I didn't have the capacity to deal with grief. Every time Mike lost a function I had to boost his morale and I couldn't stop and think about me. That's where the hospice came in. Tracey (who works in the hospice's

social work team) spent hours with me, and asked things like 'are you ok?' People get really focused on the person that's dying and you feel guilty for thinking about yourself.

"We were under so much strain as a family and I put myself at the bottom of the heap to look after everyone. I was firefighting every day because his care was so complex. The family has to take on the burden of the person dying and you do it because you love them. It's also a time where you need help. But when someone is dying, or has died, people don't always know how to talk to you; sometimes they'll even cross the road. They give you privacy at a time when you need people. I felt like an alien, going through such a crisis - it just didn't feel real. It also felt difficult to reach out to people. How do you address the elephant in the room without bringing yourself





down every time you talk about it? I really think as a society we need to be talking about dying and not pretending it doesn't happen."

THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY HOSPICE

"I don't know how anyone would care for someone at home without the hospice. There was no way I could have done it without them. Everyone was so kind, so understanding and so compassionate and it felt so different to being in hospital. It was such a relief, and a much more comfortable environment. Calling the team at the hospice was like a hug over the phone. It was moral support and knowing that I could just ring at any time was lifesaving. It was such a comfort.

"The hospice took some of the work off me. They would contact the GP and arrange everything with the district nurses which meant I got to spend more time with Mike. They recognised changes in Mike and told

me to enjoy the moments we had together. It was really hard to hear but so important to know, especially with and for the children."

TELLING THE KIDS

"I knew I had to talk to the kids but you want to protect them. But, you can't avoid the inevitable. The hospice team advised me to be open and honest. They explained that kids don't see things the way we as adults do; they don't respond and react like us— instead they dip in and out. I found comfort in knowing that I wasn't traumatising my kids by being honest with them. And so, if they asked me questions, I'd tell the truth in the kindest way possible.

"The boys would squeeze his hand. Aidan sat in Mike's bed and watched a John Wayne film with him which is a really special memory. They became caregivers too; I have a photo of Arun looking at his dad, checking if he's ok. It made me feel incredibly proud but also sad that they had to go through this. Arun is so young he may not have many memories of his dad. It was heartbreaking watching them saying goodbye."

MIKE'S DEATH

"Because of the hospice we were able to ensure Mike passed away at home. It was something that my mother had wished for, but we

had not been able to achieve. This became a regret after she died and I really wanted to make sure that Mike had a different experience.

"We were able to do this because of the hospice and their support. When the end came, Martin, my sister-in-law Mary, Dr Tajke and our carers were there. His last moments were peaceful and surrounded by people who loved him and he loved. It was a beautiful experience and there is such comfort knowing that Mike had the best possible ending. His death was a milestone, just like marriage. We want to celebrate his life."



THE FUTURE

"I am now learning now how to do things I wasn't able to do because I spent so many years looking after others. I've joined the gym and am doing Pilates classes. I feel like I'm coming through a black tunnel. When you go through something like this, it makes you see life in a different way and I'm conscious that it's so easy to get caught up in the day to day. I want to be sure of the choices I make and not let this experience be forgotten, I don't want to let it be wasted. Life doesn't have to be this thing that we endure; if we want the possibility of good things, we have to take risks.

"So whatever we do now it's because it's fulfilling, we're creating memories. Two weeks after the funeral we went to the Maldives. It was a very special holiday. We thought of Mike and of making the most of life and of not caring about what others think. Life isn't there to be endured. Ultimately, if my children are happy, then I am happy."

MY ADVICE FOR OTHERS

"Don't hesitate to ask for help from anyone, anywhere. Don't hesitate to seek help from the hospice. They will help you and everyone in your family that's affected. The hospice will help you survive; they will hold your hand, give you comfort, and they understand, so can advise you. Whatever you're feeling, they will give you peace to help you get through each day. The hospice gives you moments to let you carry on living life after."

OUR VIRTUAL WARD

Last year saw the introduction of our 'Virtual Ward' programme which supports patients with the most complex of needs so that they can get the care they need at home and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. Our team

works closely with patients, their families and their GPs, using digital platforms to monitor conditions and symptoms closely as well as visiting more frequently, giving the care needed, where people want to be cared for, and in a timely way.

THEIR SYMPTOMS AND NEEDS HAVE BEEN VARIED, AND THE CARE GIVEN HAS BEEN TAILORED TO THEM. IN THE COMFORT OF THEIR OWN HOMES. SO FAR:

350 PATIENTS
HAVE BEEN
SUPPORTED



THE AVERAGE
LENGTH OF
STAY WAS **10** DAYS

272 PATIENTS RECEIVED
SPECIFIC EMOTIONAL,
PSYCHOLOGICAL
AND/OR FAMILY SUPPORT



TEN POINTS TO OUR TREKKERS!

When we launched our first ever overseas challenge, we thought we'd struggle to fill the places. It's a big ask after all, to trek over 30 miles under the Sahara sun for days. But, how wrong were we? In fact, we so quickly ran out of places on the initial trek in November, that we had to set up a round two in March. Never again will we question the tenacity of our hospice team and local community who have now raised over £100k between them! We couldn't be prouder or more thankful to our Team



Sahara! We'll definitely be planning more overseas experiences of a lifetime. If you'd like to find out more or get involved take a look at communityhospice.org.uk/challenge

CELEBRATING GREENWICH BUSINESS AWARDS



We were honoured to be shortlisted in the categories of Health & Wellbeing and Staff Development at the Royal Greenwich Business Awards 2024.

While we didn't take home a trophy this time, we were proud to stand alongside so many incredible organisations making a difference in our community. It was a fantastic event, and our team had an amazing time celebrating the power of local businesses and community impact. A huge thank you to the Royal Borough of Greenwich for recognising our work and to everyone who continues to support us. Here's to championing compassionate care and continuous growth!

NEW SHOPS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES - AND YOU CAN BE PART OF IT

We've recently opened two new shops in Bexleyheath and Sidcup and we couldn't be more excited about what this means for our hospice. In October 2024, we opened a shop at Bexleyheath Broadway Shopping Centre, and the turnout was amazing. We were joined by the Mayor of Bexley, Councillor Sue Gower MBE JP, and Annie and Ronnie from the telly who added a special touch to the day.

Our shops aren't just about shopping, they're about making a real difference. Every item you buy helps provide care and support for people in our community who are facing terminal illness. Whether it's a new outfit, a piece of furniture, or a book to enjoy, you're not just getting a bargain, you're helping us to be there for people when they need it most.

Our shops are about much more than great products. They're about the community coming together to support each other. And we're

so grateful to all of you who shop, donate, and volunteer – every little bit helps.

"We're thrilled to have opened two new shops in Bexleyheath Centre and Sidcup. Every purchase made in our shops directly supports the hospice, and we are proud to be part of the local community. In addition to offering a wide range of donated clothing, accessories, and household items, our shops provide an opportunity for members of the local community to volunteer and support us in helping make a difference for the people of Greenwich & Bexley."
- Sue Fox, Head of Retail

So, if you haven't yet, come on down and visit us. Every time you shop, donate, or volunteer, you're making a real difference, not only for the hospice, but the planet too. And we're always looking for more volunteers to help out in our shops. It's a chance to give back, meet new people, and be part of something special.

MEET OUR NEW VOLUNTEERING TEAM

We have a wonderful bunch of volunteers, supporting the hospice in everything we do. This ranges from helping in our shops, visiting isolated people as part of our Compassionate Neighbours programme, welcoming visitors to the hospice at our reception, and getting green fingered, helping to keep our hospice grounds looking lovely for patients and families to enjoy. It's no exaggeration to say we couldn't do what we do without the support of our wonderful volunteers.

And so it's up to us to make sure that everyone who so kindly gives their time for the hospice, is supported to have the best experience they can. That's why we have a new, fully fledged volunteering team – Joss who heads up the team, Kate who is there to support our volunteers throughout their volunteer journey, Irene who looks after all our wonderful Compassionate Neighbours and Julie who helps to ensure that all of our volunteers have the best experience possible.

We always need more people to join our wonderful volunteering family. If you'd like to find out more about the roles available and the difference you could make, please take a look at our website: communityhospice.org.uk/volunteering

COMMUNITY HOSPICE

For the people
of Greenwich
& Bexley



'WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS. THEIR DEDICATION, COMPASSION, AND COMMITMENT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT ACROSS GREENWICH AND BEXLEY.' - JOSS

The team have lots planned; from celebration events for Volunteering Week in June, to regular coffee mornings across Greenwich and Bexley bringing people together for a chat, to a newsletter specifically for volunteers filling them in on the hospice and the difference they're making.

Kate said: 'It's been fantastic getting to know lots of our lovely hospice volunteers during our first few months. I've met people who are truly dedicated in supporting the hospice, which of course helps our communities across Greenwich and Bexley. We make a great team!'



AT THE COMMUNITY HOSPICE, WELLBEING IS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO.

Living with a terminal illness, caring for someone, or navigating grief can feel overwhelming. That's why our wellbeing hub is on hand. Whether you need practical advice, help with movement or just a friendly face and a cuppa, we have something for you.

Our sessions are all about making life that little bit easier. From managing breathlessness and fatigue to dementia support groups, Pilates, and even a showering service, our team is here to help you feel more like yourself again.

“Our wellbeing events have truly made a difference, offering people a supportive space to recharge,

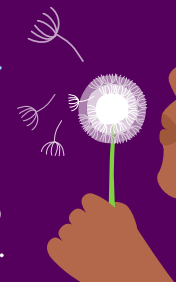
connect with others, and develop positive coping strategies,” says Louise, our Wellbeing Support Worker. “It’s been incredible to see the impact they’ve had, with many people sharing how much they’ve benefitted from the experience. It’s been wonderful to see new friendships form within our wellbeing outpatient groups.”

Our drop-in Tea & Talk and Walk & Talk sessions are always open - no need to book, just turn up when you feel like it. And if you want to join a class, a quick chat with our team will help us find the right fit for you.

EXPLORE OUR GROUPS AND CLASSES:

LIVING WELL WITH BREATHLESSNESS -

Learn strategies to manage breathlessness so you can get back to the things you love.



LIVING WELL WITH FATIGUE -

A six-week online course to help you conserve energy, move more easily, and feel more in control.



LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA -

A supportive group with activities for people living with dementia and their carers.



TEA AND TALK -

Drop in every Wednesday, 1.30–3.30pm, for a warm welcome, a chat, and a slice of cake on us.



SHOWERING SERVICE -

Accessible and private showering facilities, with support available if needed.



PILATES -

Gentle, restorative movement led by our trained physiotherapist.



WALK AND TALK -

Join us for a walk in Bostall Woods every Wednesday at 10am.



If you're unsure what's right for you, just send an email to rehab@gbch.org.uk and we'll help you find your place in our wellbeing hub.

CAMPAIGN

THIS IS HOSPICE CARE

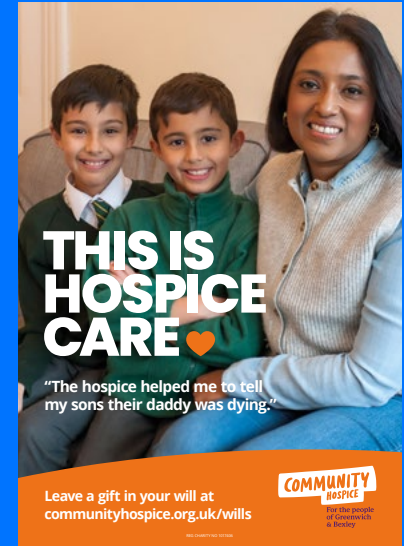
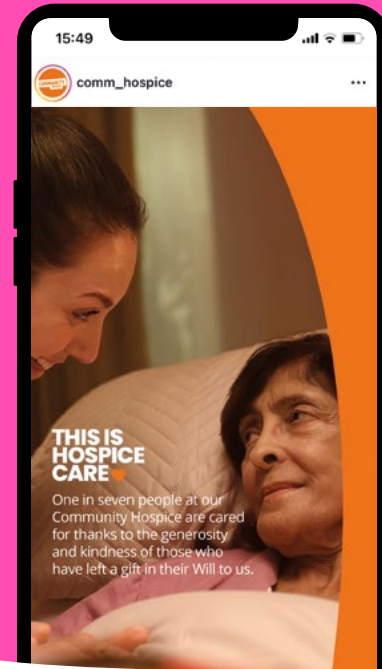
For the first time ever, we joined up with Hospice UK and 142 hospices across the country as part of a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of hospice care and of leaving gifts in wills.

Gifts left to the hospice in people's wills make up a significant proportion of our income. In fact, 1 in 7 people are cared for at the hospice thanks to gifts in wills which is such a wonderful testament to the generosity of our supporters. But we need to do all we can to continue to be around for decades to come.

The campaign titled 'This is hospice care' aimed to shine a light on the breadth of hospice care - it's

everything you're expecting, and everything you're not. It was a chance for us to share stories of incredible patients, families and supporters and demonstrate people making memories with those they love.

For us working in the hospice, we see such incredible things every day and to be able to share this as part of the campaign, was wonderful. We certainly hope to raise more money through gifts in wills, allowing us to be here for all, for now, forever, but at the very least the campaign gave us the chance to give a glimpse into hospices and we hope someone, somewhere, learnt what brilliant services they are.



HELP FAMILIES LIKE ANUSHKA'S BY MAKING A DONATION TODAY

STEP 1 Please enter your details below

Title: First Name:

Surname:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone number: Email:

IMPORTANT. Making your gift online will allow us to use your donation immediately. Just go to communityhospice.org.uk/donate. Or, you can donate by telephone by calling 0208 320 5785. Otherwise, please complete the donation form and return to the hospice.



STEP 2 I/we would like to make a donation to the hospice of:

£20 £30 £50 My preferred gift of £

Yes please, I would like to receive an acknowledgement for my donation.

STEP 3 Gift payment details

Please find enclosed a cheque (made payable to: Community Hospice)

Please debit my debit/credit card:

Card number

Expiry date Date:

STEP 4 Please Gift Aid my donations

I am a UK tax payer and want to Gift Aid my 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 the current tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signed: Date:

giftaid it

STEP 5 Keeping in touch

We'd love to keep you updated about our work and how you are making a difference to the people we support. 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 emails
- Yes, I am happy to receive text messages
- No, I do not wish to be contacted by phone
- No, please don't send me information by post

To view our full privacy policy visit communityhospice.org.uk

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

Freepost RTJU-GSSJ-KEAS, Community Hospice, 185 Bostall Hill, London, SE2 OGB.

For more information on anything seen in this newsletter please visit our website:
communityhospice.org.uk

**COMMUNITY
HOSPICE**

For the people of
Greenwich & Bexley

OPEN GARDENS FESTIVAL

12-13 June & 26-27 June 2025

EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL GARDENS IN YOUR
AREA AND SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL HOSPICE

Tickets:

1 Weekend £12 | 2 weekends £15

Single garden £3 | Children free

[communityhospice.org.uk/
opengarden](https://communityhospice.org.uk/opengarden)

t: 020 8319 9230 | e: events@gbch.org.uk

Registered with
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HOSPICE MINI MARATHON FOR KIDS

Sunday 11 May 2025
Royal Greenwich Park
[communityhospice.org.uk/
minimarathon](https://communityhospice.org.uk/minimarathon)
Registration fee: £10 per child

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KEEP AN EYE ON OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES
ON ALL OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

[COMMUNITYHOSPICE.ORG.UK/EVENTS](https://communityhospice.org.uk/events)