COMMUNITY HOSPICE NEWS

## CARING IN OUR OMMUNIT

COMMUNITY

For the people of Greenwich & Bexley

#### INSIDE

- Find out how one school pulled together in memory of a special mum
- Meet our longestserving volunteers
- 3 Explore 30 years of our hospice history

SUMMER 2024

## CELEBRATING OUR PAST AND UNVEILING OUR FUTURE

#### Dear Friends and Supporters,

This year is a very special year for us as we mark the 30th anniversary of our hospice. I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the journey so far.

Our story began in 1985 when two extraordinary individuals, Pat Jeavons and Don Sturrock, recognised the need for a hospice in the London Boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley. Despite their own health battles, they tirelessly campaigned and raised funds to make their vision a reality.

Their determination, fuelled by overwhelming community support, led to negotiations for a hospice site and after numerous setbacks, the Co-op generously offered a location on Bostall Hill in Abbey Wood. In 1994, our doors opened, marking the start of our mission to provide compassionate, high-quality care and support to people facing terminal illnesses their families and carers.

Over the past three decades, we've had the privilege of caring for thousands of people providing spiritual, social and psychological support as well as physical care. And our commitment to serving the Boroughs of Royal Greenwich and Bexley has remained steadfast, and our holistic approach ensures we address not only the physical needs of the people we care for, but also their spiritual, social, and psychological wellbeing.

Reflecting on our history, I'm reminded of the countless people who have played a vital role in our success. Our dedicated team of over 200 staff and 350 volunteers are the backbone of our operation. Their passion and commitment have enabled us to deliver care in a growing range of settings, including people's own homes, care homes, our local prisons, and Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We're also so grateful for the continuous support from local people, businesses, and organisations, who help us raise the funds we need each year to provide our services. This has totalled in excess of £120m over the last 30 years and. with only a third of our funding coming from the NHS, is now more than £7m each year.

Our vision for the future is ambitious. We aim to continuously review, adapt and expand our services, making sure we reach more people in need and continue to innovate the ways that we care. And as part of this we're excited to share our new brand look and feel with you – designed to re-energise our commitment to our purpose "To support you to live as well as you can for as long as you can". As we look to the next thirty vears of care, our focus remains on empowering individuals and ensuring they feel confident and

supported when they come into contact with our services.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey. Your support has been invaluable, and we look forward to continuing this journey together, making more positive impact in the communities that we serve.

As always, all my thanks,



Kate Heaps, Chief Executive



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### "HELPING THE HOSPICE HAS BEEN MY LIFELINE"



Meet Lucy Samworth, who, at 96, lights up our Pickford Lane charity shop with her warmth and kindness. Lucy's story isn't just about helping out – it's about how community has the power to give us a sense of identity and improve wellbeing for all who get involved.

For Lucy, the hospice isn't just a place to volunteer — it's a place that has freed her from the isolation of her home and offered her friendship and purpose. "It's a godsend for me. I haven't got any friends as such, but when I came to the hospice I met such a lot of lovely, lovely people."

Over two decades of volunteering at the hospice has seen Lucy make more than just sales — she's made real connections. And not only with her fellow volunteers, but also with many of our shoppers too. "I've even got to know the customers who come in — they come in and speak to me like a friend. It's a wonderful thing for me."

" IT'S A GODSEND FOR ME. WHEN I CAME TO THE HOSPICE I MET SUCH A LOT OF LOVELY, LOVELY PEOPLE"





As well as being a dedicated volunteer, Lucy is also a cherished member of our hospice family. And her commitment hasn't gone unrecognised. Recalling her surprise at being honoured as Volunteer of the Year in 2022, Lucy said, "When I walked in there, I didn't know what was going on! It was absolutely wonderful."

Lucy's experience shows us that by getting involved in our community, not only do we give something back, but we can also build connections, find support and make friends. So, here's to Lucy, who reminds us that community can really make a difference to so many people's lives.

# INSPIRING A MONUMENTAL FUNDRAISING EFFORT

Vicki died at the hospice in April 2024 but that didn't stop her organising an epic fundraiser first.

At 45, Vicki had been a dedicated physiotherapist for over 20 years, during which she poured her heart and soul into caring for others. Her commitment to her work was matched only by her unwavering devotion to her family, where she found her greatest joy as a mother to her children, aged 10 and 7.

Just how special Vicki was is reflected in the memories of her close friends, Sam and Eilis — memories that span three decades. From their school days at Thomas Tallis Secondary School to the present, Vicki was a constant source of joy and laughter. She was known for her competitive spirit, fierce organisational skills, love for rugby and an unwavering

support for her beloved West Ham football team.

When Vicki's illness led her to the Community Hospice, she found comfort in the care provided by the hospice team. "Whenever we spoke to her about the hospice, she was so animated and told us how amazing the hospice team were." Sam reflects, "They made her last days truly special and comfortable. The nurses went above and beyond to ensure she was able to get home most days and be a mummy to her kids again which meant the world to her."



The Hook Lane Runners: remembering Vicki and supporting the hospice

#### " HER RESILIENCE AND STRENGTH INSPIRED US ALL TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD"

Vicki and her children wanted to do something to raise awareness of the hospice and say thank you for all the care it was giving their family. With faultless organisational skills still in full force, Vicki and some of her fellow school mums organised for her children and their schoolmates to take part in the Hospice Mini Marathon.

Although Vicki died before the Mini Marathon took place, the day itself was filled with excitement and determination — and a huge turnout of support from so many people that knew Vicki and her

family. The Hook Lane Primary School runners raised an incredible £40,000 – far exceeding their initial target of £100. And through their fundraising efforts Sam and Eilis met many people who had a connection to the hospice, and they really got an idea of how important it has been to so many people's lives and their experiences of losing someone they love.

We'd like to say a huge thank you to the Hook Lane runners and everyone that sponsored them. Every penny raised makes such a difference, helping more families benefit from our care and meaning that we can make sure they're able to make their last wishes a reality, like Vicki did.



#### "RALLYING FOR THE HOSPICE WAS THE BEST YEAR OF MY LIFE"

As the Mayor of Royal Greenwich for 2022-2023, Councillor Leo Fletcher chose us to be one of his charities of the year.

During his mayoral year, Councillor Fletcher made a point of increasing the hospice's profile in our community. He's done this by putting time and effort into arranging events and raising awareness — encouraging support from individuals, businesses, and organisations alike.

We're so grateful for his efforts which have included raising over £20,000 through a charity abseil—hosted in partnership with property developers Berkeley, and an overall very generous total donation of £37,000. All in support of our mission to support patients



and their families to live as well as they can for as long as they can.

"Supporting the hospice has been a privilege and a deeply rewarding experience. Knowing that we have made a difference in the lives of those in need fills me with immense pride. I had the best year of my life rallying for the hospice and I am grateful to everyone who has supported the Mayor's Charity Appeal and contributed to this worthy cause."

We'd like to extend a big thank you to Councillor Fletcher and all those who have supported his appeal for the hospice.





#### OVERCOMING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HOSPICE CARE

For many people, until they experience hospice care their understanding of what a hospice does is limited. One of the aims of our new look and feel is to raise greater awareness of who we are and what we do throughout our community.

Kamaljit has lived in the Greenwich area for most of her life. She'd been aware of the hospice for several years, but her first real experience of it was when her father-in-law needed end-of-life care.

Initially, the family was hesitant about hospice care, "We were very reluctant to send him to a hospice because we really had no idea what happens there. You have visions of people just being left to deteriorate," Kamaljit explains. This is a common misconception of hospices, but one that is quickly dispelled when people actually see and experience our care first hand.

"Before he moved to the hospice, some of the hospice nurses came to attend to him at home. Their care was exceptional, and it gave us a glimpse of the kind of support that awaited him at the hospice."

For Kamaljit and her family, any remaining reservations quickly



dissipated upon their first visit to the hospice. "It was so lovely, so tranquil, so calm, so clean, and the staff were lovely. His room was so warm and inviting." This positive experience not only reassured Kamaljit but also brought immense relief to her mother-in-law, who had been worried about her husband's care. "Knowing he was well looked after allowed my mother-in-law to focus on her own wellbeing as well."

Despite her own experiences, Kamaljit is aware that there are still cultural taboos and misconceptions surrounding hospice care. "Many people feel it's not for them or view it as a last resort." We're hopeful that we can dispel the 'taboos' around hospice care and empower our community with knowledge and awareness of what we do.

# 30 YEARS OF THE HOSPICE, AND EVEN MORE YEARS OF VOLUNTEERING

It's not just our 30th anniversary we're celebrating this year. We're also celebrating the dedication and commitment of some of our longest-serving volunteers — Ron and Josie.



Ron and Josie began volunteering before the hospice had even been built — a whole 35 years ago. "It all began with a simple request to drive the van between the shops," Ron says. He was soon sharing this job with Josie's late husband, Frank, and before long Josie got involved too, working in the hospice shop with Ron's late wife, Maureen.

#### " WE'VE SEEN THE HOSPICE GROW FROM NOTHING TO WHAT IT IS NOW"

As the hospice grew, so did Ron and Josie's involvement — especially in fundraising. "There's so many things we've done over the years, and this is what makes it mean so much to us." One of their favourite events, they agree, were the hospice's fun days. "Fun day mornings felt like magic," Ron says, "The busy scene of volunteers setting up tables and tents for a day of fun and laughter — all in aid of the hospice."

And through all their experiences together, Ron and Josie can see the impact the commitment and efforts of volunteers has had. "We've seen the hospice grow from nothing to what it is now — the wonderful way the money is spent,



the wonderful work it does and the wonderful people who make it all happen."

Ron and Josie are a true reflection of our incredible network of hospice volunteers. Not only do they work tirelessly to raise awareness of and essential funds for the hospice, but they create a welcoming and kind community that exists to make a difference to the lives of as many people as possible. Without people like Ron and Josie, the Community Hospice would be half the place it is today.

If you're looking for a way to give back, we're always looking for new volunteers. Whether you have a little time or a lot, your contribution can make a big impact.

To find out more about volunteering at the hospice, please contact our Volunteers Department on **020 8320 5812** or send an email to **volunteersdept@gbch.org.uk** 

### " IT'S WONDERFUL PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN"



# "KEEPING MY PROMISE TO BE BY HER SIDE"

Terminal illness has a far reaching impact, and if someone close to you is dying, looking out for your wellbeing is important too.

Kevin spent time at the hospice with his wife Patricia last year. As Patricia's health declined, Kevin promised to stay with her until the end and he was amazed that he was able to do so — even staying overnight — during her final three weeks at the hospice. "I vowed to be by her side, and the hospice staff made sure I could keep that promise."

Kevin was struck by the care and dedication of the hospice staff. "They were like angels," he says. "I'd never seen such kindness and dedication before. They understood how important it was for both of us to be together." He told us it was in the little things too, "every small gesture mattered, from the smiles at reception to the comforting meals on offer."

And we're not just there when your loved one is a patient, our support continues even after they have died. "Lesley, the bereavement counsellor, helped me through a difficult time," Kevin says. "Her support meant the world to me." He's also found comfort in our Memory Tree – a tribute to those who have died at the hospice. "It provided me with a sense of peace to see Patricia's name etched among the leaves, surrounded by the names of others who had been touched by the hospice's care."

Looking back on his experience with the hospice, Kevin emphasises the importance of compassion for everyone involved in end-of-life care. "It's not just



## " WE WERE TREATED WITH DEDICATION, DILIGENCE AND DIGNITY EVERY STEP OF THE WAY"

about what you do, but how you do it," he reflects. "I like to think of it as a 3D approach. The staff at the hospice treated both of us with dedication, diligence, and dignity every step of the way."

Now Kevin is keen to get the word out about the hospice's work and help with fundraising. "Many in our community don't know that the hospice relies heavily on donations. Without the support of generous donors, they couldn't provide the high-quality care they do."



## 30 YEARS

OF CARE
AND FORWARD TO AN
EXCITING FUTURE

Our first charity

shop opens

on Bellegrove

Parade

1986

In February
we welcome
our first
outpatients,
and in April our

1994

first inpatients



Our rehabilitation services launch

2002

1985

Our founders,
Pat and Don,
launch the
'Greenwich &
Bexley Cottage
Hospice' charity

1992

Building work starts on the hospice building 1999

We launch the 'Forget Me Not Appeal' to expand the hospice building and our range of services

2008

We begin to provide palliative care in the wider community of Greenwich – including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital









The hospice lottery begins with its first ever draw

2009

The first Hospice Mini Marathon – 300 children took part!

2013

Our new programme of rehabilitation & wellbeing services for patients, carers and members of the community kicks off

2023

#### 2010

Our community team starts caring for people with terminal illness in Bexley too

#### 2018

The Compassionate Neighbours programme starts

#### 2024

The hospice is 30 and we launch our new brand!
We couldn't be prouder and more thankful for all that our community has achieved, here's to the next 30 years!





# HOLISTIC CARE AND CREATING MOMENTS THAT MATTER

The simplest things, like a melody or the companionship of a furry friend, can bring immense comfort even in our toughest times. That's why initiatives like music and pet therapy are integral to our holistic approach.



Diane has experienced the benefits of our holistic care first hand. When Diane's mother was diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis nearly two years ago, she was adamant that she wanted to be in the hospice at the end of her life. So, when the time came, Diane's mum was admitted to the hospice for inpatient care until she died.

Music always played a significant part in Diane's family's life and when our support worker Louise mentioned that a harpist would be visiting as part of our music therapy programme, Diane was thrilled.

She requested some of her mum's favourite 60s songs and a few classical pieces.

"The day the harpist visited was nothing short of magical. She played beautifully, including songs that held deep emotional connections for us. It felt like we were having our own private concert at the hospice. Watching my mum's reaction and sharing that moment together was indescribable."

The harpist even invited Diane to play the harp, fulfilling a lifelong dream. "I stood there playing this harp, with tears streaming down my face. It was something on my bucket list, and to share that moment with my mum was profoundly healing."

Coming face to face with a Shetland pony in her mum's room was another memorable hospice moment for Diane. "I couldn't believe it when a pony walked

" TO SHARE THAT
MOMENT WITH
MY MUM WAS
PROFOUNDLY HEALING"





into the room. It was such a joyful and unexpected surprise," Diane said. "The therapy animals were a delightful distraction and provided emotional comfort, making a significant positive impact during my mum's final days."

Initiatives like these therapies define the way we work at the hospice – striving to deliver holistic, patient-centred care and bringing moments of joy to some sad times. And we learn and discover new ways we can do this from every patient. As we look forward to the next 30 years we're excited to develop and expand our holistic care offering, so we can continue making sure every patient gets an experience that's tailored to them and helps them get as much out of their time with us as possible.

### WINNING AS A COMMUNITY

When we started our lottery 15 years ago, we couldn't have imagined that it would create such a big impact for us.

But most importantly, we've been delighted to see the difference it's made to people in our community, whether they're players or people we've supported, and the pleasure it brings to everyone involved.

12,000+ WINNERS

FOUR £10,000

£3,505,351



### " IT'S AMAZING RAISING ESSENTIAL FUNDS FOR THE HOSPICE THROUGH THE LOTTERY

It will play a part in making sure the hospice can be here for the next 30 years, and beyond. This year, as well as celebrating the 30th anniversary of our hospice, we're also marking the 15th anniversary of our weekly lottery.

WE'D LOVE YOU TO JOIN IN, SUPPORT THE HOSPICE AND GET A CHANCE TO WIN SOME AMAZING PRIZES WHILE YOU DO!"

Lucy, our Lottery Officer

OH WHAT A LOVELY
SURPRISE I HAD ON
WEDNESDAY WHEN I GOT
IN FROM WORK - A LETTER
FROM THE HOSPICE SAYING I
HAD WON THE LOTTERY!"

We always support the hospice as you were so wonderful in looking after our son Andrew. We can't praise you all enough for the help and support you gave to us all, so in turn we like to give something back by supporting the lottery.

Liz Corrigan



" IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO WIN! I SPENT MANY YEARS WORKING FOR THE HOSPICE. THE LOTTERY REMINDS ME OF VERY HAPPY TIMES I SPENT THERE"

John McVey

N I'VE JUST RETURNED
HOME FROM SEEING
FAMILY AND OPENED A
LETTER TO FIND A CHEQUE
FOR £2,000. AMAZED ISN'T
THE WORD!"

I play the hospice lottery to support the hospice after they helped care for my stepdad nearly ten years ago. We're about to buy our first home so this has come at an incredibly welcome time. Thank you so much!

**Rachel Turner** 

Whether you're in it to win it, or simply make a small regular donation, taking part in our lottery is a great way to support our hospice and community. And to all our players, whether you've been playing for one week or 15 years, a massive thank you — for the phenomenal difference you're making to people living with terminal illnesses, and their loved ones.

Sign up and read more details on our website communityhospice. org.uk/lottery

## DEDICATION THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Meet Maria Ford, one of our dedicated hospice nurses who we've been lucky enough to have working with us since the hospice opened.

"I started working here before we even had patients," Maria recalls with a smile. "It was cold and wintery, and I remember snowy days when we had to dig ourselves inside just to keep the hospice running. It was tough, but we felt like a family, all in it together."

Maria worked alongside our founders, Pat and Don, whose passion and determination brought the hospice to life. "Pat could be fiery, and Don was more gentle, but together, they made the magic happen. Their passion fuelled us. I was lucky to have met them both when they were fairly well and was very honoured to look after them both as they were dying."

In the early days, Maria says it was knowing that their work had a real impact that kept her and her colleagues going. They faced the challenges with a shared sense of purpose, "We worked long shifts, behind the scenes, doing whatever it took to keep the hospice going," Maria recalls. "It wasn't always easy, but we knew we were making a difference."

Maria has worked in a whole range of roles, "I began on the inpatient unit as a staff nurse and later became a ward sister," she recounts. "I've also been part of the community team, daycare and now the hospital team—wherever the hospice needed me."

As the hospice celebrates its 30th anniversary, Maria is filled with pride. "We've come a long way," she says, "but there's always so much more we can do. The hospice has evolved into a beacon of hope and healing, touching countless lives along the way."

Looking to the future Maria hopes the hospice continues to grow, but never forgets its roots and personal touch.

" THE HOSPICE HAS EVOLVED INTO A BEACON OF HOPE AND HEALING"



#### "REALISING HOSPICE CARE WASN'T AT ODDS WITH MY FAITH"

The boroughs of Royal Greenwich and Bexley are home to a wonderfully diverse community and we work hard to create a space that welcomes and embraces the many different backgrounds and cultures of our patients and their families. Our approach to care is holistic — we recognise every person as an individual and do our best to treat them in line with their needs and beliefs.

Olayinka Sowemimo-Coker's experience with us shows how faith and hospice care can work hand in hand.

When she was first referred to the hospice, she was worried that the care wouldn't align with her spiritual beliefs and was reluctant to use our services. "I was afraid that going to the hospice meant the end, but I learned that the hospice is a place where pain is managed and comprehensive care is provided, all while allowing me to hold onto my faith."

"The hospice staff respected my beliefs and supported me through every step of my treatment and recovery."

Olayinka has been so positively impacted by her experience that she wanted to help provide similar support to others. She's founded the charity, DChanger, to assist, befriend, counsel, encourage, and bring hope to people diagnosed with cancer. And the charity retains a close connection to the Community Hospice — running its monthly meet ups from our Abbey Wood home.

"I wanted to provide the same kind of support and hope that I received. DChanger Charity is about walking alongside others in their journey, offering faith, encouragement, and practical help."



# VISIT OUR NEW-LOOK BLUEBELL ROOM

### COMFORT AND CALM FOR EVERYONE

If you've been to the hospice in the last few months, you'll have noticed that our Bluebell Room has been undergoing a bit of a transformation. As one of the key hospice spaces for families, patients and hospice visitors, we're excited to share that the Bluebell Room will be re-opening just in time for our 30th anniversary celebrations.

The room has been part of dayto-day hospice life for years, and while it was still well used, we felt it was time for a bit of a refresh. We wanted to create a space that was brighter, more functional, and more inviting.

#### What's new?

Our gardens are one of the most talked about and appreciated features of the hospice – bringing a sense of natural calm to people's experience with us. So, we've done our best to bring the gardens into the Bluebell Room. New windows



have introduced more natural light and improved the garden views, while the walls have been painted in fresh, natural greens to harness the sense of natural tranquillity.

Beautiful artwork – kindly leant by a hospice supporter – adds warmth and interest to the space while new furniture and homely furnishings makes the room feel cosy and welcoming.

To make the room more functional we've created private seating areas using dividers, so families can enjoy their own space. And we haven't forgotten our younger visitors, adding a children's area for activities and games. Finally, we've built in a new kitchenette so anyone can easily make a cup of tea or grab a snack without having to leave the peace and quiet of the Bluebell Room.





The renovations were designed by Jessica Relph, who generously offered her expertise free of charge. As well as huge thanks to Jessica, we also extend our heartfelt thanks to Cllr Leo Fletcher, the Ardmore Group, BKNC, Next plc, Vistafolia, and James Shenton for their generous contributions to this renovation project.

We're always looking for ways to further enhance the care and support we provide. If you have any ideas or would like to contribute to future projects, please reach out to us at team@gbch.org.uk or visit our website at communityhopsice.org.uk.

## MAKING A REGULAR GIFT TO HELP PEOPLE WITH A TERMINAL ILLNESS MAKE THEIR TIME COUNT

Title: First name:			
Surname:			
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Donation date: 1st	15th		
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Instruction to your bank/building society to pay Direct Debit. Please pay the Community Hospice Direct Debits from this account detailed in the instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with the Community Hospice and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.				
Signature: Date:				
Please Gift Aid my donations				
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 the 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				
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				

#### Please return in the envelope provided or post to:

Community Hospice, 185 Bostall Hill, London, SE2 OGB.

#### You can also sign up via our website:

communityhospice.org.uk/support-us





# PHYSICAL CARE. EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. PRACTICAL ADVICE.

Helping people living with terminal illness make their time count

185 Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 OGB communityhospice.org.uk

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