



st michael's
hospice

Newsletter

Autumn 2025



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A note from Dr Karen Clarke Chief Executive



Thank you for taking the time to read our **Hospice newsletter**. We're always delighted to share updates with you - whether it's **heartwarming stories** from those we support, like Russell and his wife Nicky, or **new initiatives** that reflect our commitment to care and innovation. From our carer support video series and Volunteer to Career programme, to the Good Grief Festival coming to Hastings next year, there's plenty to explore in this edition.

Nationally, key developments are impacting the hospice sector. The **NHS's 10 Year Plan** recognises the vital role hospices play in delivering compassionate, community-based care, and offers a vision for integrated neighbourhood teams. The **assisted dying bill** continues its journey through Parliament, and we're reassured to hear that the Health Secretary plans to consult with palliative and end of life care providers. This means any changes to the law will be guided by expert insight and real patient experiences. We're also hopeful about a **forthcoming review of palliative care services**, which could pave the way for a more sustainable funding model - helping to secure the future of hospice care for generations to come.

Like many hospices, we're facing ongoing **financial challenges**. Our costs are increasing, and income is not able to keep pace, which means we must be especially thoughtful about our spending. We still have **exciting plans for a new building**, and while we're reviewing the timing and feasibility in light of current pressures, we're having conversations with Hastings Borough Council about our future.

It's the **individuals and groups who help raise 72% of our income each year** that make it possible for us to keep providing our core services. One such group is the **Rye and District Country Show Committee**, whose tireless work transforms an empty field in Icklesham into a joyful celebration of country life, complete with farm machinery, animals, classic cars, and delicious food. Their efforts not only raise vital funds but also bring people together for a wonderful day out.

I'd also like to celebrate our amazing **Lottery players, who over the past 28 years have raised an astonishing £10 million**. Your support makes a real difference. If you're not yet a player, joining the weekly draw gives you the chance to win up to £2,000 - all while supporting a great cause.

Many of you support us through our shops which offer a sustainable and affordable retail experience - full of hidden treasures and everyday essentials. **This festive season, shop with us in-store or online and give gifts with the feel-good factor**. Every purchase helps support people in your community living with life-limiting illness - read more on page 10.

Finally, **a heartfelt thank you** to each and every one of our supporters. Your generosity, dedication, and belief in our mission enables us to continue providing compassionate care and support to the Hastings and Rother community. **We couldn't do it without you.**

What we've been up to recently



Our new video series offers support for people caring for someone with a life-limiting illness. Featuring our clinical and palliative care specialists, the eight videos provide clear and practical advice for anyone in a caring role, including family members, friends, neighbours, and professional carers.

"Caring for someone in their dying phase can be challenging and rewarding. We hope these videos provide the necessary support to carers during this time."

Elmien Brink, Associate Director – Clinical Services

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/carers to watch the videos and find more support for carers.

Did you know we offer a range of **educational events and training** that can support health and social care professionals in Hastings and Rother?

Events and training covers topics like recognising dying, bereavement, frailty, and palliative care emergencies, with tailored sessions also available for individual care homes.



We've launched our **Volunteer to Career development programme**, with funding from Hospice UK, offering local people, like Mo (pictured centre) hands-on experience in health and social care.

"I really got to know the holistic nature of the Hospice – the spiritual wellbeing and the rehabilitative palliative care that they offer...it's been a very valuable experience."

Mo, Volunteer to Career participant



"We're committed to providing local healthcare professionals opportunities to access specialist palliative care training both in-person and online."

Jo O'Hara, Education Coordinator

Together in care

Streamlining prescriptions, improving care continuity, and increasing support access - we've been working with other East Sussex hospices to make a real difference to patients.

Making prescriptions easier for patients and carers.

We've introduced a new electronic system to simplify how patients receive their medication.

Until now, carers often had to collect paper prescriptions from the Hospice and take them to a pharmacy, sometimes making multiple trips if medication wasn't in stock.

Now, with just a click, we can send prescriptions directly to a chosen pharmacy. This means:

- No more collecting paper forms.
- Medication should be ready ahead of collection.
- We can check stocks and redirect if needed.

Fewer delays. Fewer journeys. Faster access.

Improving continuity of care for patients.

We've joined forces with palliative care consultants from St Wilfrid's Hospice, Conquest Hospital and Eastbourne District General Hospital, to improve continuity of care for patients moving between hospital, hospice, and home.

What this means for patients:

- Consistent care from the same doctors in different locations, no need for patients to repeat their story.
- Faster hospital discharge with seamless support in the community.
- More outpatient clinics offering quicker access, less travel, and earlier help from palliative care specialists.

It's joined-up care that puts patients first, wherever they are.



Hospice Line, improving access to support and advice.

We know how important it is for patients and families to have access to expert hospice advice day and night. Our healthcare professionals respond to hundreds of calls each month, offering guidance that helps people feel reassured and supported, but we know we can do more to ensure a consistent 24/7 service.

That's why we're working in partnership with our neighbouring hospices to explore how to strengthen telephone support services across East Sussex. By working together, we can share our resources to help more people, more often, ensuring everyone feels supported at any time.



Pictured above: Unified Medical Team of Palliative Care Consultants.

Active Connections

Bringing people together through movement, music, and meaningful connection - Active Connections has launched as part of our Wellbeing Service, a new initiative funded by Sussex Freemasons (through the Masonic Charitable Foundation) and managed by Hospice UK.

This monthly support group is designed for individuals living with long term progressive neurological conditions including Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, and Huntington's Disease. Carers are also welcome to attend, with or without the person they care for.

"We're pleased to offer a group specifically for people and their carers living with the impact of a progressive neurological condition. We hope connecting people through social opportunities, enjoyable activities and discussion topics provides meaningful support to all of the attendees."

Matt Wheatley, Rehabilitation Lead.

Each two-hour monthly session includes:

- 45 minutes of seated drum-based exercise or music therapy.
- 30 minutes of informal social time.
- 45 minutes of education, advice, and group discussion.



The group aims to provide a safe and empowering space where participants:

Gain a deeper understanding of their condition and learn strategies to manage symptoms.

Build social connections with others who share similar experiences.

Express themselves through music and movement.

Feel empowered to take an active role in their wellbeing and care.

Email stmichaelshosp.referrals@nhs.net or call **01424 445177** if you think you would benefit from taking part in this group.

Russell's hospice journey

Your Hospice, Your Care

Meet Russell, from Burwash. His recent stay on our In-Patient Unit (IPU) was just one part of a wider journey through hospice care - from pain management, to emotional, spiritual, and practical support for both him and his wife, Nicky.

After being diagnosed with cancer, Russell was in constant pain and had stopped doing many of the things he used to enjoy.

One night, his pain became unbearable. His wife, Nicky, contacted the Hospice, and when a bed became available, Russell was admitted to the IPU.

At first, Russell felt anxious and unsure of what it meant to stay on the IPU. Nicky was able to stay in his room with him. "It meant everything to have Nicky stay with me. I think I was frightened of what might happen."

Dr David Barclay, Medical Director, realised the pain medication Russell had been taking was making things worse.

From Cooden to Camber, and Hastings to Hurst Green, we support the whole of Hastings and Rother.

1,366 patients were cared for at home in 2024/25.

99% of patients staying on the IPU felt being there made a positive difference to their quality of life.

"Great hospice care means working as a team across different professions – a multidisciplinary team. This joined-up approach helps us support patients with what we call 'total pain' – not just physical pain, but also the emotional, social, and spiritual challenges that come with serious illness. It takes a range of experts working together to meet all those needs." – Dr David Barclay.

With new medication, Russell started to feel better, even well enough to enjoy a relaxing bubble bath. "It was so peaceful. I just laid there." Though his pain was easing, Dr Barclay noticed Russell needed more than medicine. He could see Russell had lost hope.



As the week went on, Russell began to feel more hopeful. He had coffee with his family and walked in the garden. Colin, Wellbeing Assistant, helped Russell find a walking aid that suited him best for when he returned home. Nicky was also able to chat to Colin about her experience, which reassured Russell and made him feel stronger, knowing his wife was being supported too.

Russell was eventually discharged from the IPU. He said, "Without the Hospice, I'd still have all that pain inside of me. I've spoken to so many people from different teams, I think I've used them all!"

Russell is now part of the Moving Forward group, which is part of the Wellbeing Programme. He's back to driving, seeing friends, building models, going on holiday, and walking to the churchyard in Burwash - something he always loved. "It's like I was broken," he says, "and the Hospice put me back together." We're now supporting Russell to live well at home – his journey with us continues.

With support from Dr Nikki Anne Rodwell and the IPU team, Russell visited the Chapel and met Diane, a volunteer from the Spiritual Support Team. They talked, and Diane prayed with him.

The next day, Russell was visited by Naga, Spiritual Support Coordinator, and Gemma, one of the Social Workers. He spent time chatting with them. "I just wanted to talk to someone, not answer questions, not get advice, just talk. Everyone spoke to me like a person, not just a patient."



Read Russell's full story on our website: stmichaelshospice.com/the-news-hub



Meet our Spiritual Support Team

Your Hospice, Your Care

Hospice care brings together a wide range of professionals, all working as one team to support people like Russell and his family in different ways. For Sarah and Naga, Spiritual Support Coordinators (pictured top) it means being there in whatever way someone needs - helping them stay connected to what matters most.

Describe your typical day:

"Each day is shaped by the needs of patients, and their networks. While we and volunteer, Diane (pictured below) spend time with people on the In-Patient Unit, we also speak to people over the phone and often make home visits.

"We create space for people to talk openly, helping them talk through questions, joys, fears, and frustrations. We often give practical support too, facilitating rituals, helping plan funerals, enabling blessings and weddings, or leading mindfulness and meditation sessions. We also work closely with local faith leaders, to help ensure each person's care respects their beliefs, if that's important to them."

What's it like to be a Spiritual Support Coordinator working in a hospice?

"Our role is to listen and be present. We often describe it as gently walking alongside someone at a time that can be uncertain. Spiritual support is all about what matters to someone. It's exploring what gives them strength, hope, or meaning. For some, that's rooted in religious faith; for others, it may be found in family connections, nature, creativity, or simply time spent reflecting. Being welcomed into someone's life is a privilege. To hear their stories, struggles and goals, and to offer support, with trust, respect and kindness is something we really value."

Our new awareness campaign, Your Hospice, Your Care, shines a light on the personalised, expert care and support we offer - delivered by one team, made up of many skilled professionals, all working together in the Hospice, in homes, and across the community.

It's care shaped by you, delivered with you, and made possible because of you.

Look out for Your Hospice, Your Care across our website, social media, and local news - and visit stmichaelshospice.com/services to learn more.



Good Grief Festival is coming to Hastings

We're excited to share with you that Good Grief Hastings will be taking place in May 2026.

What is the Good Grief Festival?

Good Grief Festival was originally an online festival, set up to change the way we talk about and understand grief, through creative arts, conversation, and community activities. Now the festivals take place in-person, particularly in coastal areas, where people may not have equal access to health support, such as Hastings. At the festival in Hastings there will be workshops, performances, art, and more - offering different ways to think about and share experiences of grief.

When and where will it be?

The festival will take place in lots of different locations across Hastings on the last May bank holiday weekend.

How can I keep up to date or find out more information?

We'll share more details soon, so please follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay updated.

- To learn more about the festival and its mission, visit goodgrieffest.com
- To find out more about the Coastal Community and Creative Health Project, visit coastalcch.bristol.ac.uk

Who's involved in organising the festival?

We're working with a wide range of different organisations and people to design and produce the festival, including:

- 18 Hours, a not-for-profit community events organisation.
- Good Grief Festival team.
- Coastal Community and Creative Health Project.
- Local organisations that want to get involved.
- Creative people from Hastings.

If you need help with grief or loss, we offer free bereavement support to all adults living in Hastings and Rother, whether or not you have a connection to the Hospice. Email bereavement@stmichaelshospice.com for more information.



Remember a loved one

Take time to reflect and remember those who meant so much at Lights of Love celebrations across Hastings and Rother.

See the Lights of Love leaflet inside this newsletter for more details.

Support us

The joy of meaningful giving

Every purchase from St Michael's Hospice shops or eBay helps fund expert care for people in Hastings and Rother when they need it most. Through shopping with us last year, your support helped keep Hospice doors open for almost 50 days - funding the full range of Hospice services across our community.

This festive season, give gifts that give back and help us continue to be there for those who need us. From decorations and homeware to stylish fashion, our shops offer affordable treasures to make the season bright - and meaningful.



Cards - skip the screens and send a smile with our eco-friendly, FSC-certified cards. For extra festive fun, pop in a £1 Lottery scratch card,* or tuck one into a stocking.



£12.50 spent on cards could help fund a relaxing bubble bath and hair wash for a patient on the In-Patient Unit.



Crackers - add a festive twist to your table with a box of Lottery crackers.* Each one hides a scratch card with prizes up to £1,000 to get 2026 off to a fantastic start.

£15 spent on Lottery products could provide supplies for a Wellbeing Group that helps patients and carers to live well.

Christmas party outfits - turn heads this season in stylish pre-loved fashion. From bold jumpers to sparkly accessories, find standout second-hand pieces for every festive occasion.



£20 spent on your party outfit could contribute to running a Bereavement Support Group.

*Lottery products are available to buy from Hospice events and Hospice Reception. Players must be 18+. Please play responsibly.



Thanks to people shopping with us, tonnes of clothing is saved from landfill every year. Every purchase helps protect the planet and supports hospice care for people in your community.

Shop sustainably this Christmas. Good for the planet. Good for your purse.

Jingle your way through our seven shops this festive season and give gifts that truly give back – each one offers something unique to make Christmas shopping joyful and easy.

Sidley Children's Toy Zone

Packed with toys, books, games, and stocking fillers for spend-savvy Santas.



The Edit in Rye

Your glam-up go-to, bursting with vintage and pre-loved partywear for every occasion.



Battle Gift Emporium

Brimming with high-end gifts, homeware and accessories - without the premium price tag.



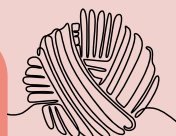
Treasure Troves in Hastings and St Leonards on Sea

Full of fashion, homewares, toys, books and games for every budget.



Bexhill on Sea Crafty Corners

From cards and fabric to buttons and bows, 56 Devonshire Road has all you need for handmade festive creations. Pop into number 79 for artwork and homewares too.



Our shops will be open later during local late-night Christmas shopping events. Pop in and ask our friendly shop teams, or check our social media for dates and times.



Shop online or visit us in-store

Scan the QR code or visit stmichaelshospice.com/retail to find shop addresses - or dash through your Christmas list from the sofa via our eBay and Vinted stores, packed with hundreds of affordable gift options.

Make volunteering your New Year's resolution

Our shops urgently need volunteers. Just a few hours a week helps fund vital hospice care and keeps our shops running. No experience needed - just a smile and some spare time.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/volunteer to find out more.

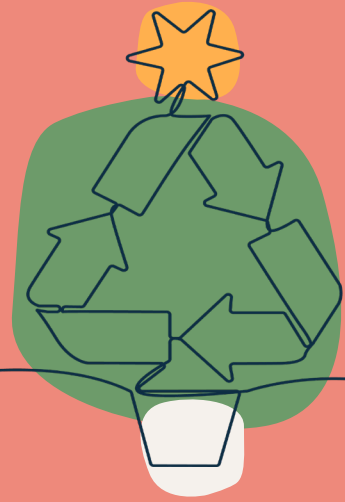


Christmas tree recycling

Recycle your Christmas tree with us this year.

One simple click. Two big wins.
Good for the planet, great for your local hospice.

Look out for all the details at stmichaelshospice.com/event-diary soon.

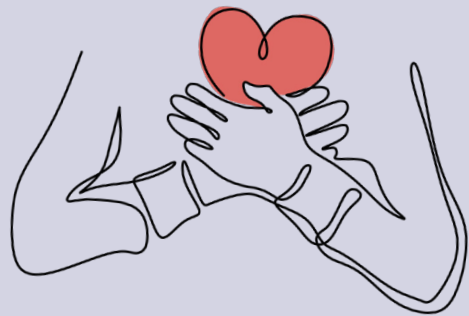


Play with purpose

If you're looking for a fun way to remember someone special, why not consider playing our weekly Lottery?

For just £1 a week, you could take out a Lottery number in memory of someone you miss.

Sign up today at stmichaelshospice.com/lottery and you could be the next £2,000 top prize winner.



Players must be 18+
Please play responsibly.

GambleAware

Dates for your diary

Come and join us at one of our upcoming events!

2025

Big Sing

Saturday 11th October

Christmas Markets

Saturday 15th and
Sunday 16th November

Saturday Social

Saturday 27th December

2026

Biz Quiz

Wednesday 25th February

Hastings Half

Sunday 22nd March

Bunny Hop

Saturday 28th March



stmichaelshospice.com

Registered charity number 288462



Scan the QR code for more details, or call **01424 456396** to speak to the Fundraising Team.

